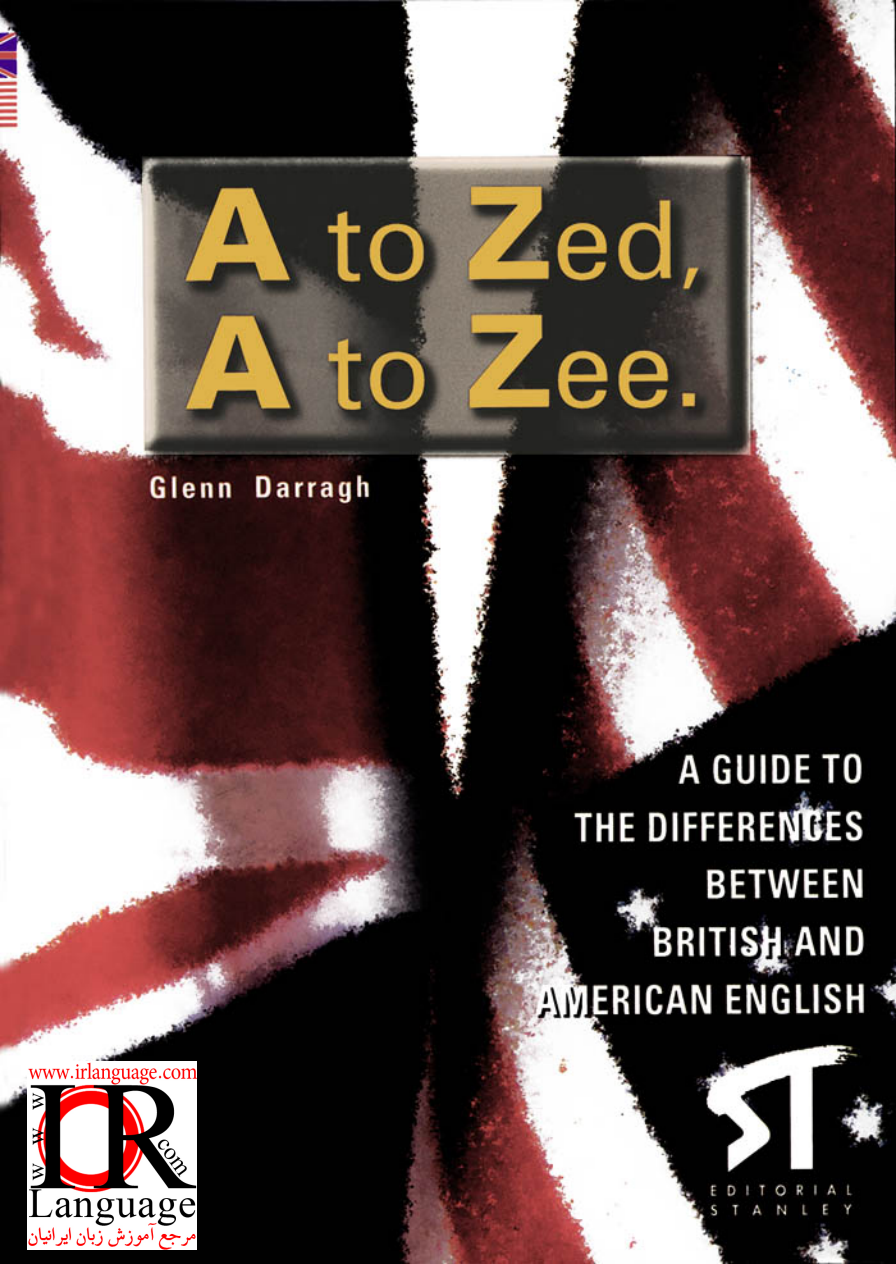




A to Zed, A to Zee.

Glenn Darragh

A GUIDE TO
THE DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN
BRITISH AND
AMERICAN ENGLISH

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EDITORIAL
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**A GUIDE TO THE DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN
BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH**

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BETWEEN BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

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Preface

This book is intended for Americans and Britons who want to understand each other better, and for foreign students of either American or British English who want to familiarise (or familiarize) themselves with the other main variety of the language. According to George Bernard Shaw, the United States and England are two great nations separated by a common tongue. In fact, most of the time the two peoples understand each other fairly well, or think they do. The accent is different, of course, but it presents no more of a barrier than any regional accent would. Differences in grammar, syntax and spelling are relatively minor. The main differences, and they are huge, are lexical and cultural.

This state of affairs is reflected in the structure and content of the present book, which makes no pretence (or pretense) of being exhaustive, but which does try to be comprehensive. Short initial chapters outline the historical background and the differences in pronunciation, spelling and grammar. The main part of the book, however, consists of a dictionary of British vocabulary and cultural references which someone from the United States might have trouble understanding, and of a dictionary of American vocabulary and cultural references that might present problems to someone from the British Isles. As the book is not aimed at academics, but at laymen (or laypersons) who are curious about language, phonetic differences are shown, when necessary, by a figured pronunciation. The *A to Zed* section is written to be read by Americans, the *A to Zee* section by Britons. Finally, a number of older terms have been retained in both sections of the dictionary for the benefit of the small number of Americans and Britons who happen to be complete novices in the study of English as a foreign language.

Introduction: Why are they so different?

When a Briton and an American meet, even though they are far from mutually unintelligible, each is soon aware of differences in the speech of the other. First, the accent is different: pronunciation, tempo, intonation are distinctive. Next, differences in vocabulary, idiom and syntax occur, as they would in a foreign language: individual words are misunderstood or not understood at all, metaphorical expressions sound bizarre, subtle irregularities become apparent in the way words are arranged, or in the position of words in a sentence, or in the addition or omission of words. It is estimated that some 4,000 words and expressions in common use in Britain today either do not exist or are used differently in the US. These differences are reflected in the way British and American English are written, so that variations in spelling and punctuation also emerge. Finally, there are immense cultural divergences, ranging from different trademarks for everyday products to different institutions and forms of government. Little wonder, then, that even in this age of global communications, we are still able to misunderstand each other. Before examining each of these major dissimilarities in detail, it may be useful to consider how they have arisen.

In fact, many of the distinctive phonetic features of modern American English can be traced back to the British Isles. To take a single example, the *r* at the end of words is pronounced in markedly different ways in the 'standard' varieties of American and British English. In the 'received pronunciation' of GB, it is barely sounded at all, so that words like *there* and *water* are pronounced *theah* and *watuh*. This pattern is characteristic

of the south-eastern part of England, which is where, in the early 17th century, the first British colonists originated. Their peculiar treatment of the final *r* survives in New England and the South, but it is exceptional in the US as a whole. The distinctive American *r*, a kind of muffled growl produced near the back of the mouth, is fully sounded. It is very similar to the *r* still pronounced in parts of the west and north of England, and in Scotland and Ireland, and was almost certainly brought to America by subsequent colonists from those parts. Since most of the British settlement in North America in the 19th century came from the north and west of England and from Ireland, especially from the northern counties of Ulster, rhotic speech, as it is called, eventually spread across the continent. In many other little ways, standard American English is reminiscent of an older period of the language. For example, Americans pronounce *either* and *neither* with the vowel of *teeth* or *beneath*, while in England these words have changed their pronunciation since the American colonies were founded and are now pronounced with an initial diphthong, like the words *eye* and *nigh*. (For a fuller discussion of these and other pronunciation differences, see Part 2.)

It is said that all emigrant languages are linguistically nostalgic, preserving archaic pronunciations and meanings. The word *vest* provides an interesting example of one of the ways in which the vocabularies of Britain and America were to grow apart. The first recorded use of the word occurs in 1666 (in the diary of Samuel Pepys), referring to 'a sleeveless jacket worn under an outer coat'. The direct descendant of this usage is the modern American *vest*,

meaning waistcoat. In the intervening centuries, however, the meaning of the word has shifted in Britain, so that it now applies to 'a piece of clothing worn on the top half of the body underneath a shirt'. Americans have retained a number of old uses like this or old words which have died out in England. Their use of *gotten* in place of *got* as the past participle of *get* was the usual form in England two centuries ago; in modern British English it survives only in the expression *ill-gotten gains*. American still use *mad* as Shakespeare did, in the sense of angry ('Don't get mad, get even.'). and have retained old words like *turnpike*, meaning a toll road, and *fall* as the natural word for the season. The American *I guess* is as old as Chaucer and was still current in English speech in the 17th century. The importance of such divergences was compounded by two parallel processes. Some words which the pilgrims and subsequent settlers brought to the New World did not transplant, but in England they survived: e.g. *fortnight*, *porridge*, *heath*, *moor*, *ironmonger*. Far more important, however, was the process by which, under the pressure of a radically different environment, the colonists introduced innovations, coining new words and borrowing from other cultures.

Many living things, for example, were peculiar to their new environment, and terms were required to describe them: *mud hen*, *garter snake*, *bullfrog*, *potato bug*, *groundhog*. Other words illustrate things associated with the new mode of life: *back country*, *backwoodsman*, *squatter*, *clapboard*, *corncrib*, *bobsled*. This kind of inventiveness, dictated by necessity, has of course continued to the present day, but many of the most distinctive Americanisms were in fact formed early: *sidewalk*, *lightning rod*,

spelling bee, *low-down*, *to have an ax to grind*, *to sit on the fence*, *to saw wood*, and so on. At the same time, other words were being assimilated ready-made into the language from the different cultures the settlers came into contact with. Borrowings from the Indians include *pecan*, *squash*, *chipmunk*, *raccoon*, *skunk*, and *moccasin*; from the French, *gopher*, *pumpkin*, *prairie*, *rapids*, *shanty*, *dime*, *apache*, *brave* and *depot*; from the Spanish, *alfalfa*, *marijuana*, *cockroach*, *coyote*, *lasso*, *taco*, *patio*, *cafeteria* and *desperado*; from the Dutch, *cookie*, *waffle*, *boss*, *yankee*, *dumb* (meaning stupid), and *spook*. Massive immigration in the 19th century brought new words from German (*delicatessen*, *pretzel*, *hamburger*, *lager*, *check*, *bummer*, *docent*, *nix*), from Italian (*pizza*, *spaghetti*, *espresso*, *parmesan*, *zucchini*) and from other languages. Jews from Central Europe introduced many Yiddish expressions with a wide currency in modern America: *chutzpah*, *kibitz*, *klutz*, *schlep*, *schmaltz*, *schlock*, *schnoz*, and *tush*. Likewise, many Africanisms were introduced by the enforced immigration of black slaves: *gumbo*, *jazz*, *okra*, *chigger*. Even supposedly modern expressions like *with-it*, *do your thing*, and *bad-mouth* are word-for-word translations of phrases used in West African languages. Eventually many of these enrichments would cross the Atlantic back to England, but by no means all of them. Those that did not cross back form the basis of the differentiation that has taken place between the American and the British vocabulary (Parts 4 and 5, for an examination of current lexical differences and explanations of many of the terms cited above).

A further important change was to take

place, in the domain of spelling. In the years immediately following the American Revolution, many Americans sought to declare their linguistic as they had their political independence. In 1780, John Adams, a future president of the United States, proposed the founding of an 'American Academy for refining, improving, and ascertaining the English Language'. The plan came to nothing but it is significant as an indication of the importance Americans were beginning to attach to their language. The more ardent patriots were demanding the creation of a distinctly American civilization, free of the influence of the mother country. Defence of this attitude was the life-work of Noah Webster (1758 – 1843), author of *The American Spelling Book*, first published in 1783 and destined to sell an estimated 80,000,000 copies over the next hundred years. This work, from which countless immigrants learnt their English, introduced such typical spellings as *honor, color, traveler, defense, offense, center, theater, ax, plow, and jail*. The influence of Webster's *American Spelling Book* and of his later *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) was enormous. It is true to say that the majority of distinctively American spellings are due to his advocacy of the principles underlying them. (The main differences are outlined in Part 1.) Moreover, some of the characteristics of American pronunciation must also be attributed to Webster, especially its relative homogeneity across so vast a continent and its tendency to give fuller value to the unaccented syllables of words (see Part 2).

As regards the basic grammar and structure of the language, there are

surprisingly few major differences. On the whole, however, Americans, as though impelled by an urgent need to express themselves, appear less constrained by the rules of grammatical form. For instance, they tend to bulldoze their way across distinctions between the various parts of speech. New nouns are compounded from verbs and prepositions: *fallout, blowout, workout, cookout, the runaround, a stop-over, a try-out*. Nouns are used as verbs – *to author, to fund, to host, to alibi* (an early example of the practice was *to scalp*) – and verbs are used just as casually as nouns: *an assist, a morph*. Any number of new verbs can be created by adding the suffix *-ize* to a noun or to the root of an adjective: *standardize, fetishize, sanitize, prioritize, diabolize*. If the exuberance of American English is reminiscent of anything, it is of the linguistic energy of the Elizabethans. In the early part of the 20th century, H.L. Mencken was already making the point. American English, he said, 'still shows all the characteristics that marked the common tongue in the days of Elizabeth I, and it continues to resist stoutly the policing that ironed out Standard English in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'.

The present geopolitical, technological, financial and commercial supremacy of the United States unquestionably underlies the expansiveness and spread of its language, nowhere more so than on the level of colloquial or popular speech. Occasionally words in British English become fashionable enough to cross the Atlantic, but the vast majority of words – like the vast majority of films, television programmes, best sellers, news magazines, and pop music lyrics which convey them – no longer

travel westwards, but eastwards. This situation is not without irony. In the 1780s, some patriots were proposing that English be scrapped altogether as the national language and replaced by another: French, Hebrew and Greek were candidates. The last of these was rejected on the grounds that 'it would be more convenient for us to keep the language as it was, and make the English speak Greek'. Two hundred and some years later, it seems fairly obvious that the Americans will keep and develop their variety of English just as they please, and the British will have to adapt as best they can. It is a process that is already well under way, with thousands of words and expressions that were exclusively American a few years ago now part of the written and spoken language in both its varieties. But there is no reason to deplore this fact. It is simply a sign that the language is doing what it has always done: it is changing and revitalizing itself.

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Spelling

A complete list of spelling differences between American and British English, assuming such a list could be compiled, would be a daunting and not particularly useful thing. For example, among many other factors, it would have to take account of differences of hyphenation and spacing in compound words (US antiaircraft/GB anti-aircraft, US bookkeeper/GB book-keeper, US ultramodern/GB ultra-modern, and so on). Since American English tends to drop the hyphen much faster than British English, this factor alone would make the list potentially endless.

The difficulties arising from hyphenation also illustrate the complexity of the subject in general, for not only do variant spellings exist for many words on both sides of the Atlantic, often the authorities in each country –i.e. the dictionary-makers –are in disagreement as to which spelling of a word is to be preferred over other possibilities. Rather than attempt a complete inventory of spelling differences, then, we have chosen to identify a number of broad categories. The following lists are illustrative rather than exhaustive. One important point should be noted: if two versions of a word are given as accepted US or GB spelling, the first is the preferred spelling and the second a variant. (Our authorities are Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary for American words and the Concise Oxford Dictionary for British.)

1. The color / colour group.

Most GB words ending in **-our** end in **-or** in the US. This difference is also apparent in derivatives.

US	GB
arbor	arbour
ardor	ardour
armor	armour
armorer	armourer
armory	armoury
behavior	behaviour
behavioral	behavioural
candor	candour
clamor	clamour
color	colour
demeanor	demeanour
enamor	enamour
endeavor	endeavour
favor	favour
favorite	favourite
favoritism	favouritism
fervor	fervour
flavor	flavour
glamor, glamour	glamour
harbor	harbour
honor	honour
humor	humour
labor	labour
misdemeanor	misdemeanour
neighbor	neighbour
neighborhood	neighbourhood
odor	odour
parlor	parlour
rancor	rancour
rigor	rigour
rumor	rumour
savior	saviour
savor, savour	savour
splendor	splendour
succor	succour
tumor	tumour
valor	valour
vapor	vapour
vigor	vigour

2. The center / centre group.

Most GB words ending in **-tre**, usually deriving from French, end in **-ter** in the US. This difference is also apparent in derivatives.

US	GB
accoutre, accouter	accoutre
accoutrement, accoutrement	accoutrement
amphitheater	amphitheatre
caliber, calibre	calibre
center	centre
centerfold	centrefold
fiber, fibre	fibre
fiberboard, fibreboard	fibreboard
fiberglass, fibreglass	fibreglass
goiter	goitre
liter	litre
luster	lustre
maneuver	manoeuvre
meager, meagre	meagre
meter	metre
miter, mitre	mitre
niter	nitre
ocher, ochre	ochre
philter, philtre	philtre
reconnoiter, reconnoitre	reconnoitre
saber, sabre	sabre
saltpeter	saltpetre
scepter	sceptre
somber, sombre	somber
specter, spectre	spectre
theater, theatre	theatre

3. The realize / realise group.

In this group, differences between GB and US spelling are far from systematic. Some verbs, regardless of the country, can only have **-ize** (*capsize, seize*) while in others only **-ise** is possible (*advertise, advise, surprise*). Dictionaries in both countries prefer the suffix **-ize** in words such as *apologize*, *legalize* and *realize*. Many Britons, however, (not to mention the spelling checkers of popular word-processing programs) do not agree with the dictionary-makers and in GB these words are still usually written with **-ise**.

US	GB
aggrandize	aggrandize, aggrandise
Americanize	Americanise, Americanize
apologize	apologise, apologize
burglarize	burglarise, burglarize
capitalize	capitalise, capitalize
categorize	categorise, categorize
characterize	characterise, characterize
colonize	colonise, colonize
criticize	criticise, criticize
dramatize	dramatise, dramatize
emphasize	emphasize, emphasise
equalize	equalise, equalize
extemporize	extemporise, extemporize
finalize	finalise, finalize
liberalize	liberalise, liberalize
mobilize	mobilise, mobilize
naturalize	naturalise, naturalize
normalize	normalise, normalize
organize	organise, organize
popularize	popularise, popularize
realize	realise, realize
recognize	recognise, recognize
satirize	satirise, satirize
stabilize	stabilise, stabilize
standardize	standardise, standardize
symbolize	symbolise, symbolize
vaporize	vaporise, vaporize

4. The edema / oedema group.

In words of Greek origin, GB English has **oe-** where US English has **e-** or less commonly **oe-**. Similarly, words with an **ae** combination in GB English (*orthopaedics, anaesthesia*) are spelt without the **a** in US English.

US	GB
anemia	anaemia
anemic	anaemic
anesthetic	anaesthetic
anesthetist	anaesthetist
cesarean	caesarean
diarrhea	diarrhoea
edema	oedema
enology, oenology	oenology
esophagus	oesophagus
estrogen	oestrogen
estrus	oestrus
fecal	faecal
feces	faeces
fetal	foetal
fetus	foetus
gonorrhea	gonorrhoea
gynecology	gynaecology
hemoglobin	haemoglobin
hemophilia	haemophilia
hemorrhage	haemorrhage
hemorrhoid	haemorrhoid
leukemia	leukaemia
maneuver	manoeuvre
orthopedics, orthopaedics	orthopaedics
Paleolithic	Palaeolithic
Paleozoic	Palaeozoic

5. The fulfill / fulfil group.

A certain number of disyllabic verbs stressed on the second syllable are written in British English with a single **-l** but in American English with **-ll**. This affects the spelling of derivatives.

US	GB
appall, appal	appal
distill, distil	distil
enroll, enrol	enrol
enrollment	enrolment
enthrall, enthrall	enthrall
fulfill, fulfil	fulfil
fulfillment	fulfilment
install, instal	install, instal
installment, instalment	instalment
instill, instil	instil
skillful	skilful
willful, wilful	wilful

In American spelling, when you add a suffix like **-ing**, **-ed**, or **-er** to a word, you double the final consonant only if the stress falls on the second syllable of the root word. Thus, as in British English, the verb 'pat-**rol**' gives 'patrolling' and 'patrolled'. On the other hand, the verb '**trav**-el' becomes 'traveling', 'traveled', 'traveler' (GB 'travelling', 'travelled', 'traveller'). Some further examples:

US	GB
canceled, cancelled	cancelled
counseled, counselled	counselled
equaled, equalled	equalled
fueled, fuelled	fuelled
groveling, grovelling	grovelling
leveled, levelled	levelled
modeling, modelling	modelling
quarreling, quarrelling	quarrelling
worshiper, worshipper	worshipper

6. One letter differences.

An interesting group is comprised of words which are spelt with a single different or additional letter. The difference affects pronunciation.

US	GB
aluminum (a- loom -in-um)	aluminium (a-lyoo- min -yum)
behoove	behove
carburetor (kar-boor- ate -er)	carburettor (kar-boor- et -ah)
check (in banking)	cheque
divorcé/divorcée (di- vor -say)	divorcee (di- vor -see)
doodad	doodah
mom	mum
plunk	plonk
putter	potter
specialty (spesh -al-tee)	speciality (spesh-ee- al -it-tee)
tidbit	titbit

7. Miscellaneous.

Important spelling differences not already noted are listed below.

US	GB
airplane	aeroplane
analyze	analyse
artifact	artefact
ass	arse
ax, axe	axe
balk	baulk
bisulfate	bisulphate
caliper	calliper
catalog, catalogue	catalogue
catalyze	catalyse
chili, chile, chilli	chilli, chili
connection	connection, connexion
cozy, cosy	cosy
crayfish, crawfish	crayfish
curb (at edge of road)	kerb
czar, tsar, tzar	tzar, czar
defense	defence
dependent, dependant (n.)	dependant (n.)
dialogue, dialog	dialogue
dialyze	dialyse
disk	disc (except in Computing, where 'disk' is also employed)
disulfide	disulphide
doughnut, donut	doughnut
draft	draught (air current, liquids)
draftsman	draughtsman, draftsman
font	fount, font
furor	furore
gray, grey	grey
jeweler, jeweller	jeweller
jewelry	jewellery
judgment, judgement	judgement
karat	carat

US	GB
ketchup, catsup	ketchup
license, licence	license (v.)
license, licence	licence (n.)
licorice	liquorice
matinee, matinée	matinée
mold, mould	mould (rot)
molt, moult	moult
mustache, moustache	moustache
naive, naïve	naïve, naive
naught, nought	nought
night, nite	night
offense, offence	offence
pajamas	pyjamas
panelist	panellist
paralyze	paralyse
peddler, pedlar	pedlar
persnickety	pernickety
pickaninny, picaninny	picaninny
plow	plough
practice, practise	practice (n.)
practice, practise	practise (v.)
pretense, pretence	pretence
program, programme	programme (v.)
program	programme (n.) (except in computing, where 'program' is also used)
reflection	reflection, reflexion
scalawag	scallywag
skeptic	sceptic
skeptical	sceptical
smolder, smoulder	smoulder
snowplow	snowplough
sulfate	sulphate
sulfur	sulphur
through, thru	through
tire (on a vehicle)	tyre
tonight, tonite	tonight
vise	vice (tool)
whiskey, whisky	whisky (as a generic name)

Pronunciation

The first point to settle in any discussion of pronunciation differences is: which pronunciations are we talking about?

Although a dialect is defined in terms of grammar and vocabulary while accent is a matter of pronunciation, different regional accents generally coincide with dialect regions. It is therefore worth bearing in mind that phonologists have identified 16 modern dialect regions in England alone (with others in Ireland,

Scotland and Wales) and 26 in the United States. This being so, it is obvious that the distinctions described below are by no means absolute. They apply mainly to those abstract notions, Standard American English or GA (General American) and Standard British English or RP (Received Pronunciation).

1. Pronunciation of 'r'.

One of the most noticeable differences between English and American pronunciation is the treatment of the **r**. In RP, this sound has disappeared except before vowels. It is not heard when it occurs before another consonant or at the end of a word unless the next word begins with a vowel, as in *Clear away those papers*. In the US, eastern New England, New York City and most of the South follow the English practice (Americans joke about New Englanders who *pahk the cah in the yahd* or New Yorkers who feed *de boids in de pahk*), but elsewhere in the States the **r** is pronounced in all positions. In RP, *lord* has the same sound as *laud*, while in words like *car* or *there* the **r** is not sounded at all but replaced by indeterminate vowels at the end. The

American **r**, on the other hand, is pronounced before vowels and consonants and also at the end of words: *air, are, arm, bear, beer, more, care, deer, fear, hair, or, peer, pure, wear, work*, etc. In phonetics, this phenomenon—the pronunciation of postvocalic **rs**—is known as rhoticity. Apart from the south-west and some northern areas, England is non-rhotic, while Scotland and Ireland are rhotic. The first pilgrims to arrive in America in 1620 were mainly from the Midlands and East Anglia. Presumably, the non-rhotic speech in the New England area today ultimately derives from them. If this is so, later colonists from the West Country, Scotland and Ireland are responsible for the rhotic speech heard in most of the US today.

2. Pronunciation of 'a'.

Another major difference is in the pronunciation of the vowel sound in such words as *laugh, fast, path, grass, dance, branch, demand, can't, half*. Short in US speech, in British speech it is long and firm: *Returning from the daaanse claaase, she ran a baaath*. Near the end of the 18th century, southern England began to change from what is called a flat **a** to a broad **a** in these words, i.e. from a sound like the **a** in *man* to one like the **a** in *father*. The change affected words in which the vowel occurred before *f, sk, sp, st, ss, th*, and *n* followed by certain consonants. In parts of New England the same change took place, but in most other parts of the country the old sound was preserved, and *fast, path*, etc., are pronounced with the vowel of *man*. This, the flat **a**, must now be regarded as the typical American pronunciation. Although highly distinctive, however, the difference between the broad **a** and the flat **a** probably affects fewer than 250 words in common use.

3. Pronunciation of 'o'.

The pronunciation of the **o** in such words as *not, lot, hot, top, dog, hod, pot* is also noticeably different. In England, this is still an open **o** pronounced with the lips rounded and the tongue at the back of the mouth. In America, however, except in parts of New England, it has commonly lost its rounding and in most words has become a sound very similar in quality to the **a** in *father*, only shorter. This illustrates a general tendency in American speech towards the neutralisation of vowel sounds. Non-essentials are dropped so that words like *don* and *dawn* are pronounced identically. In England vowels tend to retain their sharpness.

4. Pronunciation of ‘u’.

The **u** in words like *mule*, *mute*, *mutual*, *cube*, *butane*, *Houston* is pronounced identically on both sides of the Atlantic, i.e. with an imaginary **y** inserted before it: *myool*, *myoot*, *myoo-tyoo-al*, etc. In the US, however, such words are exceptions; the usual pronunciation is without the **y** sound. Thus, *new*, *nude*, *tune*, *student*, *duke*, *Tuesday* are pronounced *noo*, *nood*, *toon*, *stoodent*, *dook*, *toosday*. In England, these words are all pronounced with the **y** sound, and this is generally the case. Exceptions exist, of course, such as *assume*, *suit*, *lute*, which are usually pronounced *assoom*, *soot*, *loot*. It may be noted, however, that English stage actors are still trained to say *assyoom*, *syoot*, *lyoot*.

5. Pronunciation of ‘t’.

In British English **t** is usually pronounced quite clearly but in many instances of American speech, when it is not the initial consonant in a word, it may either be pronounced like a **d** or it may disappear entirely. When the **t** occurs between two vowel sounds, it is often pronounced as **d**: *bitter*, *latter*, *shutter*, *water*, *waiting*, *writing*, etc. In Britain, on the other hand, the pronunciation of such pairs as *bitter*/*bidder*, *latter*/*ladder*, *shutter*/*shudder*, *waiter*/*wader*, *writing*/*riding* leaves no room for ambiguity, even when the context is unknown. The **t** in American speech tends to disappear after nasal sounds like **m**, **n**, and **ng**. Thus, words like *dentist*, *twenty*, *understand*, *intercontinental* become *dennist*, *twenny*, *unnerstann*, *innerconninennal*. The only comparable phenomenon in Britain, in well-defined areas like Cockney London, Glasgow in Scotland, or Ballymena in Northern Ireland, is the use of the glottal stop to replace the **t** in words like *butter*, *matter*, *water*, and so on.

6. Pronunciation of particular words.

Other differences in pronunciation are less important, since they concern only individual words or small groups of words. For example, in Britain *been* has the same sound as *bean*, but in America it is like *bin*. In Britain, the last syllable of words like *fertile*, *sterile* and *missile* rhymes with *aisle*. In the US, the vowel is much shorter, or a mere vocalic **i** – *fert-il*, *ster-il*, *miss-il* or *miss'ɪ*. Americans do not suppress the final **t** of *trait*, as Britons do, or pronounce an **f** in *lieutenant*. The following table shows examples of such minor differences, but it should be borne in mind that relatively few words are pronounced so differently as to cause any but the most fugitive confusion. Nor are these examples restrictive: in the US *leisure* is pronounced both with a long vowel (*leezhure*) and to rhyme with *pleasure* (*lezhure*), but the former is more common.

WORD	US	GB
address	ah -dress	a- dress
advertisement	ad-ver- tize -ment	ad- vert -tis-ment
agile	a -jil	a -jile
alternate (adj.)	a ult-er-n't	aul- tern -et
apricot	a -pri-cot	ay -pri-cot
aristocrat	a- rls -to-crat	ar-Is -to-crat
asphalt	as -fault	as -felt
ate	ate	et
ballet	bal- ay	bal -ay
bitumen	bi- too -men	bich -er-men
buoy	boo -ee	boy
Byzantine	blz -an-teen	bi- zan -tine
Caribbean	k'- rib -ean	kari- bee -an
charade	sha- raid	sha- rahd
chassis	cha -see	sha -see
chimpanzee	chim- pan -zee	chimp-'n- zee
cigarette	sig -a-ret	sig-a- ret
clerk	klerk	klark
composite	k'm- pos -it	kom -p'-zit
cordial	oor -jil	oor -dee-al
cremate	oree -mate	cr'- mate
croquet	cro- kay	cro -kay
debris	d'- bree	deb -ree
detail	dee- tail	dee -tail
dislocate	dis- lo -cate	dis -lo-cate
dynasty	dle -nas-tee	dln -as-tee
figure	fig -yer	fig -ger
frustrate	frus -trate	frus- trate
garage	ga- rahzh	gar -ij
inquiry	in -kwi-ree	in- kwir -ee
interesting	In -ter-est-ing	In -trest-ing
jaguar	jag -wah	jag -u-ahr
laboratory	lab -ra-tor-ee	la- bor '-tree

WORD	US	GB
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lever	lev -er	lee -ver
lieutenant	loo- ten -ant	lef- ten -ant
literally	lit -er-al-ee	litt -ral-ee
marquis	mar- kee	mar -kwis
migraine	my -grain	mee -grane
omega	o- may -g'	o -m'-g'
perfume	per- fume	per -fume
premature	pree -m'- toor	pre -m'- tyoor
premier	pr'- meer	prem -e'
privacy	pry -va-see	priv -a-see
process	praw -cess	pro -cess
produce (n.)	pro -doos	praw -dyoos
progress (v.)	pro- gress	praw- gress
recluse	rec -loos	re- cloos
renaissance	ren -a-sens	re- nay -sens
route	rout	root
schedule	sked -ule	shed -ule
semi-	sem -eye	sem -ee
status	stat -us	state -us
strychnine	strik -nine	strik -neen
tomato	tom- ay -doe	tom- ah -toe
trait	trayt	tray
trauma	trah -ma	trau -ma
vase	vayz	vahz
vitamin	vy -ta-min	vit -a-min
Z	zee	zed

7. Stress and articulation.

It will be noticed that in several of the examples given above, the difference in pronunciation is chiefly one of stress. In words like *address*, *ballet*, *cigarette*, *detail*, *garage*, *perfume*, Americans and Britons stress different syllables. These differences stand out in conversation but they are of minor importance from the point of view of understanding. They are relatively few in number and in context they are always easily comprehensible. A more remarkable difference is the greater clarity with which American pronounce unaccented syllables. George Bernard Shaw said he once recognized an American because he accented the third syllable of *necessary*, and the tendency of Americans to keep a secondary stress on one of the unaccented syllables of a long word is a consequence of their effort to pronounce all the syllables. This distinctive pattern of American speech, the due emphasis given to each syllable of a word, can, in part, be attributed to the influence of Noah Webster's spelling bees (see the introduction). Webster quoted Sheridan with approval: 'A good articulation consists in giving every letter in a syllable its due proportion of sound ... and in making such a distinction between syllables, of which a word is composed, that the ear shall without difficulty acknowledge their number.' Words ending in -ary, -iry and -ory tend to be longer in American English than in British. Thus, the American has *sek-ret-air-y* instead of the British *sek-re-t'ry*, *ne-cess-air-y* instead of *ne-cess-'ry*, *lab-ra-tor-ee* instead of *la-bor'-tree*.

As we see from this last example, the suppression of syllables in British English has been accompanied by a difference at times in the position of the chief stress. Speech, of course is much more than the quality of the sounds: there is also pitch, tempo, intonation. Generally, Americans speak more slowly and with less variety of intonation, and this again may be partly attributed to their disposition to articulate each syllable of a word. The Victorian novelist, Captain Marryat, observed that: 'The Americans dwell upon their words when they speak – a custom arising, I presume, from their cautious, calculating habits; and they have always more or less of a nasal twang.'

Grammar and Usage

In grammar and syntax, American and British English are remarkably similar. Examples of the main differences are listed below. The influence of American English on British English, however, is constantly growing – through films, television, pop music, the internet, and so on – so that even such contrasts as these are likely, if not to disappear, at least to diminish in importance. It should be noted that, in many of the following cases, two different forms are possible in one variety of English, while only one of the forms is normal in the other variety.

1. Irregular verbs.

A number of verbs can be either regular or irregular in the Past Simple. However, in the US and in GB the forms most commonly used are not the same. Where two forms are given in the following list, the first is the more commonly employed. It will be seen that in American English, the regular form is usually preferred, and in British English the irregular.

US	GB
burned, burnt	burnt, burned
dived, dove	dived
dreamed, dreamt	dreamt, dreamed
knelt, kneeled	knelt
leaned	leaned, leant
leaped, leapt	leaped, leapt
learned	learned, learnt
smelled, smelt	smelt, smelled
spelled	spelt, spelled
spilled, spilt	spilt, spilled
spoiled, spoilt	spoilt, spoiled
woke, waked	woke

The verbs *fit*, *quit* and *wet* are regular in British English, but irregular in American. In the case of *quit* and *wet*, however, American usage is now well on its way to replacing British in GB.

US	GB
fit - fit - fit	fit - fitted - fitted
quit - quit - quit	quit - quitted - quitted
wet - wet - wet	wet - wetted - wetted

In American English, the past participle of *get* is either *gotten* or *got*, except in the structure *have got*, used as an alternative to *have*, which is the same as in British English.

US	GB
His tennis has gotten (or got) much better.	His tennis has got much better.
I've gotten to know him over the years.	I've got to know him over the years.
I've got a terrible headache.	I've got a terrible headache.

2. Use of Past Simple and Present Perfect tenses.

In American English these two tenses are often interchangeable in conditions where only the present perfect can be used in British English. For instance, when an action in the past has a result now (as in the first example below), the present perfect is normally employed. Other typical cases are with words like *just*, *already*, and *yet*; and with *ever* and *never* when referring to a period of time that continues until now.

US	GB
or I've lost my keys. Have you seen them? or I lost my keys. Did you see them?	I've lost my keys. Have you seen them?
or John isn't here. He's gone to the bank. or John isn't here. He went to the bank.	John isn't here. He's gone to the bank.
or I'm not hungry. I've just had breakfast. or I'm not hungry. I just had breakfast.	I'm not hungry. I've just had breakfast.
or You can't speak to him. He's already left. or You can't speak to him. He already left.	You can't speak to him. He's already left.
or Have you finished that letter yet? or Did you finish that letter yet?	Have you finished that letter yet?
or Have you ever read <i>Macbeth</i> ? or Did you ever read <i>Macbeth</i> ?	Have you ever read <i>Macbeth</i> ?
or I've never seen this man before in my life. or I never saw this man before in my life.	I've never seen this man before in my life.

3. Auxiliary and modal verbs.

In British English, *shall* and its contracted negative *shan't* can be substituted for *will*, indicating the future, when used with the pronouns *I* and *we*. In American English *shall* is unusual. Where *shall* is used in GB to ask for advice, *should* is employed in the US.

US	GB
We will probably go to Florida.	We will (<i>or shall</i>) probably go to Florida.
I won't be here tomorrow.	I won't (<i>or shan't</i>) be here tomorrow.
Which bus should I take?	Which bus should (<i>or shall</i>) I take?

In both varieties of English, it is possible to use *can* and *could* with verbs of perception, i.e. *see*, *hear*, *feel*, *smell*, and *taste*, but this practice is much more common in British English.

US	GB
I saw Alan coming up the hill.	I could see Alan coming up the hill.
I smell something burning.	I can smell something burning.

In British English *needn't* is often substituted for *don't need to*, but in America *needn't* is unusual.

US	GB
We have plenty of time, we don't need to hurry.	We have plenty of time, we don't need to hurry (<i>or we needn't hurry</i>).

In subjunctive constructions, for example after verbs like *suggest*, *recommend*, *demand*, *insist*, etc., *should* is often used in British English. In American English this is unusual.

US	GB
What do you suggest I do?	What do you suggest I (<i>should</i>) do?
I recommended that he be fired.	I recommended that he (<i>should</i>) be fired.
It's vital that he be informed.	It's vital that he (<i>should</i>) be informed.

In British English, but not American, *do* can be used alone as a substitute verb after an auxiliary verb. In such cases, the auxiliary verb is stressed.

US	GB
—Will you go to the party? —I may. I haven't decided yet.	—Will you go to the party? —I may (<i>or I may do</i>). I haven't decided yet.
He didn't pass the test, but he could have if he had studied a little harder.	He didn't pass the test, but he could have (<i>or he could have done</i>) if he had studied a little harder.

4. Expressions with ‘have’ and ‘take’.

In a small number of expressions, British English prefers *have* to US *take*.

US	GB
All I want is to take (or have) a shower and go to bed.	All I want is to have a shower and go to bed.
Why don't you take a bath now and then?	Why don't you have a bath now and then?

5. Position of adverbs.

Certain adverbs, known as mid-position adverbs (e.g. *sometimes, always, never, often, definitely, certainly*), are usually placed after auxiliary verbs and before other verbs: *He has certainly done it*. However, when we wish to emphasize the auxiliary verb, we put most mid-position adverbs before it instead of after: *He certainly has done it*. In British English this second construction is always emphatic. In American English, however, the adverb is frequently placed before the auxiliary, even when there is no intent to emphasize.

US	GB
She probably has arrived by now. (normal)	She has probably arrived by now. (normal) She probably has arrived by now. (emphatic)
It probably will lead to a vote. (normal)	It will probably lead to a vote. (normal)

6. Use of ‘real’ as an intensifier.

In informal American English, *real* is often used before adjectives and adverbs where British English insists on *really*.

US	GB
That was a real nice meal.	That was a really nice meal.
He drives real fast.	He drives really fast.

7. Collective nouns.

In British English, collective nouns like *government, staff, committee, company, firm, audience, family, team*, etc., can take either a singular or a plural verb. In American English such nouns usually take a singular verb. The same is true of certain proper nouns, for example the names of countries or companies.

US	GB
The government intends to cut taxes.	The government intends (<i>or</i> intend) to cut taxes.
The committee hasn't made a decision yet.	The committee hasn't (<i>or</i> haven't) made a decision yet.
Italy is scheduled to play Brazil in the opening match.	Italy is (<i>or</i> are) scheduled to play Brazil in the opening match.
Air France has announced additional flights.	Air France have (<i>or</i> has) announced additional flights.

8. Prepositions.

The use of prepositions occasionally varies, especially in adverbial expressions. When a preposition is used in one variety of English but not in the other, this is signified by **(-)**. Here are some well-known examples:

US	GB
It's twenty of twelve, I've got to go.	It's twenty to twelve, I've got to go.
They arrived at ten after two.	They arrived at ten past two.
What time is it? It's half past nine.	What time is it? It's half (-) nine.
His was different from (<i>or</i> than) mine.	His was different from (<i>or</i> to) mine.
I'd like for you to go now.	I'd like (-) you to go now.
How many people were in the course?	How many people were on the course?
What do you do on the weekend (<i>or</i> on weekends)?	What do you do at the weekend (<i>or</i> at weekends)?
She lives on the same street.	She lives in the same street.
I'll write (-) you as soon as I get back.	I'll write to you as soon as I get back.
They met with the directors to discuss it.	They met (-) the directors to discuss it.
The boss wants to talk with you.	The boss wants to talk to you.
My aunt came over to see us.	My aunt came round to see us.
He parked in back of the restaurant.	He parked behind the restaurant.
You'll have to do it over .	You'll have to do it again .

9. Use of ‘one’.

The pronoun *one*, used to talk about people in general, including the speaker and the listener, is much less used in the US than in GB. When it is used in American English, however, *he*, *him* and *his* are generally used later in a sentence to refer back to it, where British English would continue to use *one* or the possessive *one’s*.

US	GB
One cannot prosper unless he works.	One cannot prosper unless one works.
One should always be kind to his mother.	One should always be kind to one’s mother.

10. Other usages.

Most of the differences we have mentioned are small and easily understandable in context, even if they sound amusing or quaint, as *shan't* and *ought* do in the US, or as *gotten* and *in back of* do in GB. Many usages, it is true, occur in only one variety of the language and are not generally understood in the other. To *visit with*, for example, is used in the US meaning to visit, but it has the additional meaning of being with another person virtually, so that it is possible to visit with someone by phone. This usage is unknown in Britain. (Many similar examples are discussed in the dictionary section of this book.) But the usages that give American and British English their peculiar characters belong to the first category. Only an American would say 'I sure could use a drink' or 'I need to use the bathroom'. A Briton would find some equivalent but subtly different linguistic formula, such as 'I'm dying of thirst' or 'I have to go to the loo'. If, as Shaw said, Britain and America are 'divided by a common language', perhaps the main element of division lies precisely in such subtle distinctions as these.

PART FOUR

A to Zed: a GB / US lexis

A

A.N. OTHER, *n* - an unnamed person. Used in team lists, etc. to indicate that a place remains to be filled.

A SHARES, *pl n* - ordinary shares in a company which carry restricted voting rights.

A-LEVEL, *n* - an exam generally taken at age 18 in three subjects. It is the advanced level of the General Certificate of Education, needed for university entrance. *What were your A-level subjects? He failed A-level German.* An **A/5-LEVEL** is similar, but with a smaller course content than an A-level.

ABATTOIR, *n* - a slaughterhouse, packing-house.

ACCOMMODATION, *n* - in the sense of lodgings, always singular in GB usage.

ACCUMULATOR, *n* - 1. an automobile storage battery. 2. in horse racing, a collective bet or parlay, in which the winnings on each successive race are carried forward to become the stake on the next.

ACE, *adj (col)* - first-class, excellent. *She had a real gift for political organization and was an ace campaign manager.*

ADAM'S ALE, *n (col)* - water.

ADMIRALTY BOARD, *n* - a department of the British Ministry of Defence, responsible for the administration of the Royal Navy. The equivalent of the Navy Department in the US.

ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND, *n* - a children's playground containing building materials, slides, climbing structures, etc. Often found in city parks.

ADVERT, *n (col)* - short for advertisement, like ad.

ADVISER, *n* - a subject specialist who advises school principals on current teaching methods and facilities. Similarly, an **ADVISORY TEACHER** is one who visits schools to advise teachers on curriculum developments within a particular subject area.

AERIAL, *n* - antenna.

AFTERS, *n (col)* - dessert. *What's for afters?*

AGGRO, *n (col)* - Short for both aggravation

and aggression, it signifies aggressive behaviour, rough stuff, especially by street gangs. It has also acquired the more generalised meaning of irritation and exasperation. *I don't need the aggro. Postponing new hospitals and roads causes far less aggro than firing superfluous municipal workers.*

AIR MARSHAL, *n* - a senior RAF officer, equivalent in rank to a general.

AIRCRAFTMAN, *n* - the most junior rank in the RAF, equivalent to airman.

AIRER, *n* - a collapsible apparatus for drying clothes outside.

AIRING CUPBOARD, *n* - a warm closet, usually built around a hot water tank, where clothes that have been washed and partly dried can be dried completely.

AIRY-FAIRY, *adj (col)* - fanciful, unrealistic, head-in-the-clouds. *I'm sick of your airy-fairy schemes to make money - just go out and find an honest job.*

ALDERMAN, *n* - until 1974, when the post was abolished, one of the senior members of a local council, elected by other councillors.

ALL, *adv (col)* - especially in the expression **AND ALL** added to the end of a statement and meaning: as well, too. *And you can wipe that silly grin off your face and all.* **ALL** also combines with some other words to add emphasis, e.g. *damn all, bugger all, sod all, fuck all*, all meaning 'absolutely nothing'.

ALL IN, *adj* - 1. *(col)* completely exhausted, tired out. 2. all-inclusive, i.e. with any other costs or service charges included in the price: *The flat is £400 a month all in.*

ALLOTMENT, *n* - a small plot of land rented by an individual, usually a city-dweller, for growing vegetables and flowers. *We start digging our allotment in early spring.*

ALSATIAN, *n* - a German shepherd dog.

AMBER, *n* - an amber traffic light used as a warning between green and red. An **AMBER GAMBLER** is a driver who races through the lights when they are at amber.

AMUSEMENT ARCADE, *n* - a covered area with coin-operated game machines.

ANAESTHETIST

ANAESTHETIST, *n* - an anesthesiologist.

ANCIENT MONUMENT, *n* - a historical building or the remains of one, usually dating from the medieval period or before, that has been designated as worthy of preservation and is often in the care of a government department.

ANGELS-ON-HORSEBACK, *n* - a dish of oysters wrapped in slices of bacon and served on toast.

ANKLE SOCKS, *pl n* - anklets.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING or (*abbr*) **AGM**, *n* - the statutory meeting of the directors and shareholders of a company or of the members of a society, held once every fiscal year, at which the annual report is presented.

ANORAK, *n* - a parka. The word is Eskimo.

ANTICLOCKWISE, *adj & adv* - counterclockwise.

AREN'T, *v* - in interrogative sentences and question tags, the usual contraction of 'am not'. *Why can't I decide? I'm the manager of this firm, aren't I?*

ARGY-BARGY, *n (col)* - a wrangling argument or a lot of fuss about something. *Why did she leave? She just couldn't stand all the argy-bargy at home.*

ARMY LIST, *n* - an official list of all serving commissioned officers of the army and reserve officers liable for recall.

ARROWS, *n (col)* - darts. *How about a game of arrows?*

ARSE, *n (col)* - ass, fanny. To **ARSE ABOUT** is to play the fool or act stupidly. An **ARSE LICKER** is a brown-nose.

ARTICLED CLERK, *n* - a person who is being trained as a lawyer while working in a legal office.

ARTICULATED LORRY, *n* - a trailer truck.

ASSENTOR, *n* - one of the eight voters legally required to endorse the nomination of a candidate in a parliamentary or local election in addition to the nominator and the seconder.

ASSESSOR, *n* - an insurance claims adjuster.

ASSURANCE, *n* - life insurance. Similarly, the verb **ASSURE**: to insure against loss of life.

ATHLETICS, *pl n* - track and field, as in an ath-

BACKBENCHER

letics team. An **ATHLETE** is a competitor in track and field events.

ATTACHÉ, *n* - a junior member of the staff of an embassy or legation.

ATTAINMENT TARGET or (*abbr*) **AT**, *n* - a general defined level of ability that a student is expected to achieve in every subject at each key stage of the NATIONAL CURRICULUM.

AUBERGINE, *n* - an eggplant.

AUNT SALLY, *n* - in carnivals, the figure of an old woman's head, usually with a clay pipe, which people throw balls or wet sponges at. Figuratively, it refers to anybody who is a target for insults or criticism, or to anything which is set up as a target for disagreement or attack with the object of producing constructive thought, new ideas, etc.

AUNTIE, *n (col)* - an informal name for the BBC, also known as the Beeb.

AUTOCUE, *n* - a teleprompter. Both words are trademarks.

AXE, *n & v* - **AX**. As a verb, it means the severe cutting down of expenditure, especially the removal of unprofitable sections of a public service.

AYE AYE, *interj* - an expression of amused surprise at encountering something that confirms one's suspicions, expectations, etc. *Aye aye, what are those two up to, then?*

B

BABY-WALKER, *n* - a go-cart.

BACK PASSAGE, *n* - the rectum.

BACK SHIFT, *n* - the second shift of the working day.

BACK-TO-BACK, *n* - a small house, part of a row of such houses, built so that their backs are joined to another row or separated from it only by a narrow alley. Usually built in the 19th century in industrial and mining towns.

BACKBENCHER, *n* - a rank-and-file Member of Parliament. In the House of Commons, gov-

BACKHANDER

BARRISTER

ernment ministers and the opposition's shadow cabinet sit facing each other on the front benches, with ordinary MPs ranked on the benches behind.

BACKHANDER, *n* (col) - 1. a bribe. 2. a seemingly complimentary comment which is in fact an insult or criticism, also called a **BACK-HANDED COMPLIMENT**.

BACKLOG, *n* - an undesirable accumulation of something which has to be dealt with, e.g. uncompleted work or unsold stock. *A backlog of cases to be heard. The backlog of demand for housing.*

BACKWOODSMAN, *n* (col) - a peer who rarely attends the House of Lords.

BACON, *n* - in the expression **SAVE ONE'S BACON**: to escape from a dangerous situation, to save one's skin.

BAD PATCH, *n* - especially in the expression **GO THROUGH A BAD PATCH**: to have a rough time. *He went through a bad patch after his wife died.*

BAG, *v* (col) - to reserve the right to have or do something. *He bagged the best seat, as usual.*

BAGMAN, *n* (col) - a traveling salesman.

BAGS, *n* (col) - 1. lots, piles. *We've got bags of things to do before we leave. There's bags of room. He has bags of money.* 2. trousers.

BAIRN, *n* - a child. Scottish and northern English.

BALACLAVA, *n* - a warm woolen headgear which almost completely covers the head and neck, originally worn by soldiers in the Crimean War but now by mountain climbers, skiers, bankrobbers, terrorists, antiterrorists, etc.

BALLOCKS or BOLLOCKS, *pl n* (col) - 1. testicles. 2. a muddle, a foul-up. *It was an easy enough job but he managed to make a bollocks of it.* 3. a disparaging term for another person. *You clumsy bollocks, look what you've done.* The word can also be used as an exclamation of annoyance, disbelief, etc. *Oh bollocks, I've missed my train.* As a verb, it means to botch or bungle. From Old English *beallucas*.

BALLOON, *n* - in various sports, a kick or stroke that propels a ball high into the air. Used as a modifier: *a balloon shot.*

BALLS-UP, *n* (col) - something botched or fouled up.

BALLY, *n* (col, old) - a euphemistic word for bloody. *I've just about had enough of your bally nonsense.*

BANBURY CAKE, *n* - a pie consisting of a pastry shell filled with currants, raisins and candied peel, with a criss-cross pattern on the top.

BANG, *v* - to cause stock prices to fall by rapid selling. Alternatively, to sell stocks rapidly, thereby causing prices to fall.

BANG ON, *adj & adv* (col) - with absolute accuracy. *Bang on cue they arrived.*

BANGER, *n* (col) - 1. a sausage. 2. a noisy old car, a clunker. 3. a firecracker that explodes with a sudden bang.

BANK HOLIDAY, *n* - a legal holiday when banks are obliged to remain closed.

BAP, *n* - a large soft bread roll, like a hamburger roll.

BAR BILLIARDS, *n* - in pubs, a table game in which short cues are used to pocket balls into holes guarded by wooden pegs

BARGEPOLE, *n* (col) - the ten-foot-pole you wouldn't touch something with. *This whole business stinks of fraud - I wouldn't touch it with a bargepole.*

BARLEY WINE, *n* - an exceptionally strong beer.

BARMAN, *n* - a bartender. If a woman, a **BAR-MAID**.

BARMY, *adj* (col) - mad, eccentric, daft. *She's extremely rich and completely barmy.*

BARNEY, *n* (col) - a noisy argument, a row.

BARONET, *n* - a commoner who holds the lowest hereditary title of nobility, ranking below a baron. He styles himself 'Sir Joe Blow, bart' to distinguish himself from a knight.

BARRACK, *v* (col) - to jeer at, criticize loudly or shout against a speaker, a player, a team, etc.

BARRISTER or BARRISTER-AT-LAW, *n* - a lawyer who is qualified to plead cases in court, also known as a **QUEEN'S COUNSEL**. Preparatory work, called a **BRIEF**, is done by a

BARROW

SOLICITOR.

BARROW, *n* - a handcart, usually with two wheels and a canvas roof, used especially by street vendors. A **BARROW BOY** is a man who sells his wares from such a cart..

BASE RATE, *n* - 1. the rate of interest used by individual commercial banks as a basis for their lending rates. 2. the rate at which the Bank of England lends to the discount houses, which effectively controls the interest rates charged throughout the banking system.

BASH, *n (col)* - in the expression **HAVE A BASH**: to make an attempt, have a try. *She decided to have a bash at swimming the Channel.*

BASH UP, *v (col)* - to beat up, to thrash.

BATH, *v* - to have a bath.

BATH BUN, *n* - a sweetish cake containing spices and dried fruit.

BATH CHAIR, *n* - a hooded wheelchair for invalids.

BATH CUBES, *pl n* - bath salts in cube form.

BATHE, *v* - to go swimming, but not to have a bath.

BATSMAN, *n* - the batter in cricket.

BATTEN, *n* - a narrow strip of wood used especially for flooring. To **BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES** is to use battens in nailing a tarpaulin over a hatch on a ship to make it secure.

BATTERY, *n* - a large group of cages for rearing poultry intensively. As a modifier: *battery hens*.

BB, *adj* - the symbol, printed on pencils, for double black, denoting a very soft lead.

BEAK, *n (col)* - a judge, magistrate or school-teacher.

BEANFEAST, *n (col)* - specifically an annual dinner given by employers to employees, but the word can be used of any festive occasion.

BEARING REIN, *n* - a checkrein in horse-riding.

BEARSKIN, *n* - a tall helmet of black fur worn by certain regiments in the British Army.

BED AND BREAKFAST or (*abbr*) **B&B**, *n* - overnight accommodation and breakfast in a boarding house or hotel.

BEDSITTER or **BEDSIT**, *n* - one-room accommodation, a combination of living room and

BIKE

bedroom, often with rudimentary cooking and washing facilities. Also called **BEDSITTING ROOM**.

BEEB, THE, *n (col)* - an informal name for the BBC.

BEEFEATER, *n* - a yeoman warder of the Tower of London, dressed in 15th-century uniform for the delight of tourists and children. Originally the term was pejorative, referring to a well-fed servant.

BEERMAT, *n* - a coaster, usually with a brewery's logo printed on it.

BEETROOT, *n* - beet, red beets.

BELISHA BEACON, *n* - a flashing light in an orange ball mounted on a pole, marking a PEDESTRIAN CROSSING point.

BELL, *n (col)* - a telephone call, especially in the phrase **GIVE SOMEONE A BELL**. *Why don't you give him a bell and ask him?*

BELT UP, *v (col)* - to shut up, stop talking. Often used in the imperative.

BEND, *n (col)* - in the expression **ROUND THE BEND**: crazy. *That job was driving me round the bend. I'd have gone round the bend if I'd stayed there any longer.*

BENEFIT, *n* - an allowance paid by the government to a person who is sick or unemployed under the national insurance scheme.

BENT, *adj (col)* - 1. corrupt, venal. *A bent cop-per.* 2. homosexual.

BERK, *n (col)* - a stupid or irritating person. *Lewis was an uncouth berk, whose attitude to what he called her 'little bits of writing' was arrogant and absurd.*

BESPOKE, *adj* - of a suit, jacket, etc., made to the customer's specifications, custom-tailored. *At Favourbrook it costs the same to have a bespoke waistcoat made as it does to buy one off-the-peg.* A **BESPOKE TAILOR** is one who makes or sells such items.

BIERKELLER, *n* - a pub decorated in German style and selling German beers.

BIFFIN, *n* - a variety of red cooking apple.

BIG DIPPER, *n* - another name for a roller coaster.

BIKE, *n (col)* - in the imperative expression **ON YOUR BIKE**: get out of here.

BILL

BILL, *n* - the check in a restaurant or bar, as well as the bill in a store. The word 'check' is not used in this sense in Britain.

BILLINGSGATE, *n* - obscene or abusive language. Billingsgate was, until 1982, the site of London's largest fish market, where foul language was proverbial.

BIN, *n* - a storage place for bottled wine.

BIND, *n* (*col*) - a troublesome or annoying situation, a drag. *It's such a bind having to cook your own meals.*

BINT, *n* (*col*) - a derogatory term for a girl or woman.

BIRD, *n* (*col*) - 1. a girl or young woman. Cf. US chick. 2. prison time. *Just settle down and do your bird - you'll find the time passes quickly enough.*

BIRO, *n* - a kind of ballpoint pen. A trademark that has become generic. Pronounced *by-row*.

BISCUIT, *n* - 1. a cookie. 2. a thin, crisp, cracker. Colloquially, to **TAKE THE BISCUIT** is to be regarded (by the speaker) as the most surprising thing that could have occurred. *But the biscuit was taken by several clergymen who gave evidence.*

BIT, *n* (*col*) - the word combines with many others to denote a sexually attractive woman, e.g. *a bit of all right, a bit of crumpet, a bit of skirt, a bit of stuff, a bit of tail, a bit of fluff*, etc.

BITTER, *n* - draught beer with a slightly bitter taste. The most popular kind of beer in Britain.

BLACK, *v* - to organize a boycott of specified goods, jobs, work, etc. as part of a labor union action, especially in support of strike action elsewhere.

BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA, *n* (*col*) - any cramped, overcrowded place. Named after a small dungeon in which in 1756 the Nawab of Bengal confined 146 English prisoners, of whom only 23 survived.

BLACKCAP, *n* - formerly, the cap worn by a judge when passing the death sentence.

BLACKLEG, *n* - a scab in a labor dispute. It can be used as a modifier: *blackleg labor*. As a verb, it means to act against the interests

BLOODY

of a union, especially by refusing to join a strike.

BLAG, *n* (*col*) - an armed robbery, perpetrated by a **BLAGGER**. 'You go pulling blags with other villains, you wind up being grassed, know what I mean?' (G.F. Newman)

BLANCMANGE, *n* - a jello-like dessert, stiffened usually with cornstarch and set in a mould. Pronounced *bla-monge*.

BLEEDING, *adj* & *adv* (*col*) - see **BLOODY**.

BLIGHTER, *n* (*col*) - a fellow, usually derogatorily. *Let's make these blighters pay for what they've done.*

BLIGHTY, *n* (*col*) - England, home. A World War I term, still used by troops serving abroad. A **BLIGHTY ONE** was a slight wound, sufficiently serious for the recipient to be sent home to England.

BLIMEY, *interj* (*col*) - an exclamation of surprise or annoyance. Short for Cockney **GORBLIMEY**: God blind me.

BLIMP, *n* - a pompous, reactionary, jingoistic person. From a cartoon character called Colonel Blimp. The adjective is **BLIMPISH**.

BLIND, *v* (*col*) - to swear, especially in the expression **EFFING AND BLINDING**. *He stormed in here effing and blinding, accusing us of having betrayed him.*

BLINKERS, *pl n* - blinders on a horse.

BLINKING, *adj* (*col*) - see **BLOOMING**.

BLOCK OF FLATS, *n* - an apartment house. Unlike US cities, British cities are never laid out in a grid, so the word block is never used in the US sense of a city block.

BLOCK RELEASE, *n* - the release of industrial trainees from work to study at a college for several weeks.

BLOCK VOTE, *n* - the system whereby the vote of each delegate at a conference (especially of trade unionists) has a value in proportion to the number of people he represents.

BLOKE, *n* (*col*) - a man, a guy.

BLOODY, *adj* & *adv* (*col*) - an all-purpose intensifier with no specific meaning. Sometimes, but not always, it adds a note of irritation: *Bloody train's never on time. What a bloody fool you've been. I've been up all*

BLOODY-MINDED

bloody night. That was a bloody wonderful meal. A variant is **BLEEDING**.

BLOODY-MINDED, *adj* - deliberately obstructive and unhelpful. The noun is **BLOODY-MINDEDNESS**. *This isn't inefficiency, it's sheer blood-mindedness.*

BLOOMER, *n (col)* - stupid mistake, a blunder.

BLOOMING, *adv & adj (col)* - an intensifier like **BLOODY**, but milder. Interchangeable with **BLINKING**, **FLIPPING** and **FLAMING**. All are clearly euphemistic. *He's a blooming genius. It was blooming painful. She's a blinking nuisance.*

BLOW, *n (col)* - cannabis.

BLOWER, *n (col)* - a telephone.

BLUE, *n* - a sportsman who represents Oxford or Cambridge University and has the right to wear the university color. *An Oxford blue.*

BLUEBOTTLE, *n (col, old)* - a policeman.

BLUES, *THE*, *pl n* - the Royal Horse Guards.

BOARDER, *n* - a pupil who lives at a boarding school except during vacations. Cf. **DAYBOY**.

BOAT RACE, *THE*, *n* - the annual race, held in the spring on the River Thames, between the Oxford and Cambridge University rowing crews. Inexplicably part of the national calendar.

BOB, *n (col)* - formerly, a shilling. Still used in expressions like **A BOB OR TWO** and **A FEW BOB**, meaning a lot of money. *A car like that must have set you back a few bob.*

BOBBY, *n (col)* - a policeman. After Robert Peel, who, as Home Secretary, set up the Metropolitan Police Force in 1828. Until relatively recently, the term **PEELER** was also used for a policeman, and in Ireland still is.

BOFFIN, *n (col)* - a scientist, especially one engaged in military research.

BOG, *n (col)* - the toilet.

BOILED SWEET, *n* - a hard sticky piece of candy, made of boiled sugar.

BOILER SUIT, *n* - overalls.

BOLLARD, *n* - a small post placed on a curb or traffic island to make it conspicuous to drivers.

BOLSHIE or **BOLSHY**, *adj (col)* - 1. difficult to manage, rebellious, refusing to conform. 2. po-

BOTHER

litically radical or left-wing. Shortened from **Bolshevik**.

BOLT HOLE, *n* - a hiding place, a place of escape from danger.

BOMB, *n* - 1. a great success, especially in the expressions **GO DOWN A BOMB** and **GO LIKE A BOMB**. *The play went down a bomb.* 2. a lot of money. *Speculators made a bomb. It cost me a bomb.*

BOMBARDIER, *n* - a noncommissioned rank below the rank of sergeant in the Royal Artillery.

BONCE, *n (col)* - the head.

BONK, *n (col)* - 1. to hit. 2. to have sex with someone.

BONKERS, *adj (col)* - mad, crazy. *You must be flaming bonkers!*

BONNET, *n* - the hood of an automobile.

BOOB, *n (col)* - an embarrassing mistake, a blunder. *Inviting her mother was a bit of a boob, wasn't it?*

BOOK IN, *v* - to record something in a register, especially one's arrival at a hotel.

BOOKER PRIZE, *n* - the best-known British literary prize, awarded annually for a novel written by a British, Commonwealth or Irish author.

BOOKING, *n* - a reservation, e.g. of a table in a restaurant, a room in a hotel, a seat in a theater, a seat on a train. Used as a modifier: *the booking office at the station.*

BOOKSTALL, *n* - a newsstand.

BOOT, *n* - an automobile trunk. A **BOOT SALE** or **CAR-BOOT SALE** is a kind of collective garage sale, with people selling goods from the trunks of their cars in a parking lot hired for the occasion.

BOOTIE, *n (col)* - a Royal Marine.

BOOZER, *n* - a bar or pub, as well as a person who likes drinking. *I'm going down to the boozer for half an hour.*

BORSTAL, *n* - formerly an establishment in which offenders aged 15 to 21 were detained for 'corrective training'. The word survives although the institution was replaced in 1982 by youth custody centres.

BOTH WAYS, *adj & adv* - see **EACH WAY**.

BOTHER, *interj* - an exclamation of mild an-

BOTTLE

noyance.

BOTTLE, *n (col)* - nerve, courage, especially in the phrase **LOSE ONE'S BOTTLE**. *If you're wanting to pull out and haven't the bottle to say, ... I'll trouble you to get up your courage and declare yourself now, not later* (John le Carré). *I didn't want them to think I'd lost my bottle.*

BOTTOM DRAWER, *n* - the equivalent of a hope chest.

BOVVER, *n (col)* - rowdiness caused by gangs of teenage thugs, synonymous with **AGGRO**. A **BOVVER BOY** is such a youth. His accoutrements include **BOVVER BOOTS**, heavy boots used for kicking in gang fights.

BOWLER, *n* - 1. a derby hat. 2. in cricket, the person who bowls the ball to the batsman.

BOWLS, *n* - a game played on a level lawn, in which opposing teams take turns to roll large wooden balls towards a target ball called a 'jack'. Usually played by elderly gentlemen in sedate and verdant surroundings.

BOX, THE, *n (col)* - television, the tube.

BOX JUNCTION, *n* - a road junction with yellow cross-hatching painted on the road surface. Vehicles may only enter the hatched area when there is a clear exit.

BOX ROOM, *n* - lumber room.

BOXING DAY, *n* - December 26, a public holiday. The term derives from the 19th-century custom of giving Christmas boxes, or gifts, to tradesmen and staff on this day.

BOYO, *n (col)* - a boy or young man. Often used as a form of address, especially by the Welsh.

BRACES, *pl n* - suspenders (for holding up trousers).

BRAINSTORM, *n (col)* - a sudden mental aberration. *I can't imagine why I bought such an awful piece of rubbish - I must have had a brainstorm.*

BRASS, *n (col)* - money. A northern English term. Proverbially: *Where there's muck, there's brass.*

BRASS FARTHING, *n (col)* - something of little or no value. *His opinion isn't worth a brass farthing.* Farthings were originally silver

BROADS

coins, but were subsequently minted in bronze.

BRASS NECK, *n (col)* - effrontery, nerve.

BRASSED OFF, *adj (col)* - fed up, disgruntled.

BREAK, *n* - a recess at school.

BREATHALYSER, *n* - a device used for estimating the amount of alcohol in the breath, the equivalent of a drunkometer. A trademark.

BREEZE, *n (col)* - a lively quarrel.

BREW UP, *v (col)* - to make tea, especially out of doors.

BRICK, *n* - in the expression **DROP A BRICK**: to make a tactless or indiscreet remark.

BRICKIE, *n (col)* - a bricklayer.

BRIDGE ROLL, *n* - a soft bread roll in a long thin shape, like a hotdog bun.

BRIEF, *n* - a solicitor's instructions to a **BARRISTER** on the representation of a client, giving all the facts and points of law of a case. Hence, to **BE GIVEN A BRIEF** means to be given official instructions to do or deal with something: *When you were appointed librarian here, you were given the brief of developing research into local history.* In under-world slang, a brief is a lawyer, especially a solicitor. *I'm not answering any questions till I've seen my brief.*

BRIGHT SPARK, *n (col)* - a person who is clever or witty. The term is often used ironically. *Who's the bright spark who left my papers next to an open window?*

BRING OUT, *v* - 1. to cause workers to strike. 2. to introduce a girl formally into society as a debutante.

BRISTOLS, *pl n (col)* - a woman's breasts. Short for Bristol City, **RHYMING SLANG** for titty.

BRITISH TELECOM, *n* - Britain's major telecommunications company, formerly state-owned.

BROAD BEAN, *n* - a lima bean.

BROADMOOR, *n* - an institution in Berkshire for housing and treating criminals who are mentally ill.

BROADS, THE, *n* - a group of shallow navigable lakes, connected by a network of rivers, in Norfolk and Suffolk, or the region around these lakes, which is a tourist center notable for its bird sanctuaries.

BROCK

BROCK, *n* - another name for a badger, used especially as a form of address in stories.

BROLLY, *n* (*col*) - an umbrella.

BROWNED-OFF, *adj* (*col*) - thoroughly discouraged, fed up. *Frankly, I'm browned-off dealing with them, they never pay on time.*

BROWNIE or **BROWNIE GUIDE**, *n* - a member of the junior branch of the Girl Guides, British equivalent of the Girl Scouts.

BROWNING, *n* - a substance used to darken soups, gravies, etc.

BRUCE, *n* - a jocular name for an Australian.

BRUMMIE, *n* (*col*) - a native or inhabitant of Birmingham, Britain's second largest city.

BRUSH-UP, *n* - the act of tidying one's appearance, especially in the phrase **WASH AND BRUSH-UP**.

BST, *n* (*abbr*) - British Summer Time, comparable to daylight saving time.

BUBBLE AND SQUEAK, *n* - leftover boiled cabbage and potatoes fried together, sometimes with cooked meat. The name is imitative of the sounds it makes as it cooks.

BUCKET SHOP, *n* - any small business that cannot be relied upon, especially one selling cheap airline tickets.

BUDGERIGAR, *n* - an Australian parakeet, commonly kept as a pet. Informally, a **BUDGIE**.

BUFFER, *n* (*col*, *old*) - especially in the phrase **OLD BUFFER**: a foolish and bumbling old man. *Hedley threatened to resign, that's what swayed the old buffers on the committee.*

BUFFET CAR, *n* - a railroad car where drinks and snacks are served. Pronounced *boof-fay*.

BUGGER, *n* (*col*) - in spite of its formal meaning, usually a humorous or affectionate term for a man or child. *He's a clever little bugger. The silly old bugger talks to himself.* **BUGGER ALL** means nothing. See **ALL**. As a verb, it means to completely ruin something. *Well, that's buggered our plans for the weekend.* To **BUGGER ABOUT** means to waste time on unnecessary tasks. To **BUGGER OFF** is to depart quickly, often used in the imperative. To **BE BUGGERED** is to be exhausted, but **I'LL BE BUGGERED** is a set phrase used to express amazement.

BUREAU

BUILDING SOCIETY, *n* - a savings and loan association.

BULGE, *n* - the projecting part of an army's front line, a salient.

BULL, *n* - short for the bull's-eye of a target, e.g. in darts.

BULLET, *n* (*col*) - dismissal from a job, especially in the phrases **GET THE BULLET** or **GIVE SOMEONE THE BULLET**.

BULLFINCH, *n* - a high thick hedge which is too difficult for a horse and rider to jump.

BUM, *n* - the buttocks or anus.

BUM-BOY, *n* (*col*) - a disparaging term for a male homosexual.

BUMF or **BUMPH**, *n* (*col*) - toilet paper, and, by extension, official documents, forms, memorandums, etc. *I wish the trade department would stop sending me all this bumf.* Short for bum fodder.

BUMP START, *n* - a method of starting a car by engaging low gear with the clutch depressed and pushing the car or allowing it to roll down a hill until sufficient momentum has been acquired to turn the engine by releasing the clutch. Also used as a noun.

BUMSUCKING, *n* (*col*) - obsequious behaviour, brown-nosing. See **ARSE**.

BUN, *n* - a small roll, similar to bread but containing sweetening, spices, dried fruit, etc. Colloquially, to **HAVE A BUN IN THE OVEN** means to be pregnant.

BUNCHES, *pl n* - a hairstyle in which hair is tied into two sections on either side of the head at the back.

BUNG, *v* (*col*) - 1. to throw, sling. 2. to bribe. As a noun, it means either a tip or a bribe.

BUNK, *v* (*col*) - a hurried departure, usually under suspicious circumstances, especially in the phrase **DO A BUNK**. *Next thing I knew, the whole family had done a bunk.*

BUPA, *n* (*abbr*) - the British United Provident Association, Britain's largest private health insurance company.

BUREAU, *n* - a large writing desk with pigeon holes, drawers, etc., against which the writing surface can be closed when not in use. US bureau = GB chest of drawers.

BURN

BURN, *n* - in card games, to throw away or exchange a useless card.

BURSARY, *n* - the treasury of a college, etc.

BURTON, *n (col)* - in the expression **GO FOR A BURTON**: to be hopeless, broken, useless, or lost, or to be killed. *Well, that's our pay rise gone for a burton.*

BUSBY, *n* - a tall fur helmet with a bag hanging from the top, worn by hussars in the British Army.

BUSHEL, *n* - 1 Imperial bushel = 0.03637 cubic meters (1 US bushel = 0.03524 cubic meters).

BUSK, *n* - to make money by singing, dancing, acting, etc. in public places, e.g. in front of queues at movie theaters or in the subway. A **BUSKER** is a street-performer of this kind.

BUST-UP, *n (col)* - a disturbance or brawl.

BUTCHER'S, *n (col)* - a look at something. *I had a quick butcher's at the paper before I went to work.* RHYMING SLANG, from butcher's hook.

BUTTERY, *n* - in some universities, a room in which food is sold to students.

BUTTON, *n* - an object of no value, especially in the expression **NOT WORTH A BUTTON**.

BUTTY, *n (col)* - 1. sandwich. *A jam butty, a bacon butty.* 2. a friend or workmate. Mainly northern English.

BUZZ OFF, *v* - to go away, beat it. Usually imperative.

BY-LAW, *n* - a municipal ordinance.

BYE-BYE, *sent sub (col)* - goodbye.

BYRE, *n* - a shelter for cows.

C

CLACK-HANDED, *adj (col)* - 1. left-handed. 2. clumsy.

CADDIE, *n* - a small container, especially for tea.

CADGE, *v* - to bum or sponge something, e.g. food or money. To be **ON THE CADGE** is to en-

CARVE-UP

gage in cadging, as a **CADGER** does.

CAFÉ, *n* - a small, inexpensive restaurant or snack bar. Colloquially, a **CAFF**.

CALL BOX, *n* - a public telephone booth.

CAMP BED, *n* - a cot. GB cot = US crib.

CAMPUS UNIVERSITY, *n* - a university in which the buildings, often shops and cafés, are all on one site.

CANNON, *n* - a carom in billiards. As a verb, to cause to carom.

CANTABRIGIAN, *n* - a member of graduate of Cambridge University (or, incidentally, of Harvard University) or a person from Cambridge.

CAP, *n* - in sport, an emblematic hat given to someone chosen for a representative team. *He has won three England caps.*

CAPITAL, *adj (col, old)* - excellent, first-rate. *That's a capital suggestion.*

CAPTIAL GEARING, *n* - in accounting, leverage.

CAR PARK, *n* - a parking lot.

CARAVAN, *n* - a trailer.

CARCASS TRADE, *n (col)* - the practise of reconstructing dilapidated pieces of old furniture with new veneer and passing them off as antiques.

CARD PUNCH, *n* - another name for a key punch.

CARDS, *pl n* - an employee's national insurance and other documents held by the employer. To **ASK FOR ONE'S CARDS** is to leave a job, to **GET ONE'S CARDS** is to be fired.

CARETAKER, *n* - a janitor.

CAREY STREET, *n* - formerly, the street in which the London bankruptcy court was situated. It now signifies the state of bankruptcy, especially in the phrase **BE IN CAREY STREET**.

CARNY or **CARNEY**, *v (col)* - to coax or cajole or act in a wheedling manner.

CARR, *n* - an area of scrub-covered bog or fern.

CARRIAGE, *n* - a railroad passenger coach or subway car.

CARRIER BAG, *n* - a shopping bag.

CARRY-ON, *n* - a fuss or commotion. *I don't care what she said, I won't put up with a carry-on like this.*

CARVE-UP, *n* - the act of dishonestly prearrang-

CASH UP

ing the result of a competition.

CASH UP, *n* - in stores, etc., to add up the money taken during the working day.

CASHIER, *n* - a teller.

CASTOR SUGAR, *n* - very fine granulated sugar.

CATAPULT, *n* - a slingshot.

CATCH OUT, *v (col)* - to trap someone in an error or doing something reprehensible. *I've caught him out in more than one lie, he simply isn't trustworthy.*

CATSEYES, *pl n* - glass reflectors placed at regular intervals along roads to guide drivers at night. A trademark.

CATTLE GRID, *n* - a Texas gate.

CAUCUS, *n* - a group or faction within a political party, who discuss strategy, choose candidates, etc.

CAUSE LIST, *n* - a list of cases awaiting trial.

CAUTION, *n* - a formal warning given to a person suspected of a crime that his words will be taken down and may be used in evidence against him. As a verb, to give such a warning.

CBE, *n (abbr)* - Commander of the Order of the British Empire, a title awarded for service to the community.

CENTENARY, *n* - a centennial. Pronounced *cen-teen-ery*.

CENTRAL RESERVE OR CENTRAL RESERVATION, *n* - the median strip on a highway.

CESS, *n* - an Irish word for luck, especially in the phrase **BAD CESS TO YOU!**

CHALK, *n* - a score or record. Colloquially, **BY A LONG CHALK** means by a wide margin, by far. **NOT BY A LONG CHALK**: by no means, not possibly. *Not every farm-worker belongs to the union, no, not by a long chalk.*

CHAMBERS, *pl n* - in England, the set of rooms occupied by **BARRISTERS** where clients are interviewed.

CHAMPERS, *n (col)* - champagne.

CHANCELLOR, *n* - 1. the chief secretary of an embassy. 2. the honorary or titular head of a university.

CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER, *n* - a minister of the crown, nominally appointed as representative of the Queen (who is Duchess of Lancaster), but in practice em-

CHESTERFIELD

ployed on parliamentary work determined by the Prime Minister.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, *n* - the senior finance minister in the British government, equivalent to the Secretary of the Treasury.

CHANGEOVER, *n* - in sport, the exchange of ends (of a playing field) by two teams, usually at half time.

CHAR, *v (col)* - to do housework, cleaning, etc. as a job. The word is possibly a corruption of chore. As a noun, it is short for **CHAR-WOMAN**, a person who does such work. It is also a slightly old-fashioned word for tea.

CHARADE, *n* - an absurd act, a travesty.

CHARGE NURSE, *n* - a nurse in charge of a ward in a hospital: the male equivalent of sister.

CHARGE SHEET, *n* - a document on which a police officer enters details of the charge against a prisoner and the court in which he is due to appear.

CHARLIE, *n (col)* - a silly person, a fool.

CHASE, *n* - an enclosed area of land where wild animals are preserved to be hunted.

CHAT UP, *v (col)* - to talk flirtatiously to a person of the opposite sex with a view to seduction. In a wider sense, to talk persuasively to someone, especially with an ulterior motive. *What I wanted to know when I was fifteen was the best way to chat up girls, and it's what I still want to know.*

CHEAP, *adj* - in the expression **ON THE CHEAP**: at a low cost.

CHEERIO, *sent sub (col)* - goodbye!

CHEERS, *sent sub (col)* - the most common drinking toast. Depending on context, it can also mean goodbye (cf. **CHEERIO**), or thanks.

CHEESED-OFF, *adj (col)* - bored, fed up, angry. *She left a couple of hours ago, I think she got cheesed-off waiting for you.*

CHEMIST'S OR CHEMIST'S SHOP, *n* - a pharmacy, drugstore. It dispenses prescribed medicines and sells toiletries, cosmetics, etc. but never food or drink.

CHEQUERS, *n* - the official country residence of the Prime Minister.

CHEST OF DRAWERS, *n* - a dresser, bureau.

CHESTERFIELD, *n* - a large tightly stuffed sofa, often upholstered in leather, with upright

CHESTY

arms of the same height as the back.

CHESTY, *adj (col)* - 1. suffering from a chest disease or symptomatic of one. *He had a chesty cough.* 2. with a large over-developed bosom.

CHICORY, *n* - endive.

CHILDCARE, *n* - care provided for children without homes or with a seriously disturbed home life by a local authority.

CHIMNEY, *n* - a smokestack, e.g. of a locomotive or ship.

CHIMNEYPIECE, *n* - another name for mantelpiece.

CHINA, *n* - pal, buddy, especially in the phrase **MY OLD CHINA**. Originally Cockney **RHYMING SLANG** of china plate with mate.

CHINLESS WONDER, *n (col)* - a person, especially an upper-class person, who lacks strength of character.

CHINWAG, *n (col)* - a chat or gossipy conversation.

CHIPOLATA, *n* - a small, skinny sausage.

CHIPPY, *n (col)* - 1. a fish-and-chip shop. 2. a carpenter.

CHIPS, *pl n* - French fries.

CHIT or **CHITTY**, *n* - a note, memorandum, or receipt. From a Hindi word meaning note. *A mother who wants to get skimmed milk for her baby must first get a chit signed by a health worker.*

CHOCK UP, *v* - to cram full. *The cubby-hole was chocked up with old newspapers and various kinds of rubbish.*

CHOKED, *adj (col)* - angry, upset or disappointed. *He was too choked to say anything more.*

CHOKEY, *n (col)* - prison slang for solitary confinement.

CHOO-CHOO, *n* - a child's name for a train.

CHOP, *v (col)* - to dispense with or reduce. To **GET THE CHOP** is to be fired.

CHOPPER, *n* - a small hand ax or a butcher's cleaver. Also a slang name for the penis.

CHRISTIAN NAME, *n* - first name, given name.

CHRISTMAS BOX, *n* - a tip or present given at Christmas. See **BOXING DAY**.

CHRISTMAS PUDDING, *n* - another name for plum pudding.

CLAPPED-OUT

CHUCK IN, *v (col)* - to abandon or give up.

CHUCKER-OUT, *n (col)* - another name for a bouncer.

CHUFFED, *adj (col)* - pleased, delighted. *They were well chuffed at the size of the pay rise.*

CHUNDER, *n & v (col)* - vomit.

CHUNKY, *adj* - of clothes, made of thick bulky material.

CHUNTER ON, *v* - to mutter or grumble incessantly and meaninglessly.

CHURN, *n* - a large container for milk.

CID, *n (abbr)* - Criminal Investigation Department, the detective division of a police force.

CIDER, *n* - an alcoholic drink made from the fermented juice of apples. Hard cider.

CINE CAMERA, *n* - a movie camera. **CINE FILM** is movie film.

CINEMA, *n* - the usual word for a movie house, theater.

CIRCUIT JUDGE, *n* - a judge presiding over a county court or crown court.

CIRCUS, *n* - an open, usually circular place in a town where several streets converge, e.g. *Piccadilly Circus*.

CITY CENTRE, *n* - downtown.

CITY EDITOR, *n* - the editor in charge of financial and commercial news. The **CITY DESK** is his or her department.

CITY, THE, *n* - the area in central London in which the UK's major financial business is transacted, or the financial institutions located there. Equivalent of Wall Street.

CIVIL LIST, *n* - the annuities voted by Parliament for the support of the royal family, the royal household and royal hangers-on.

CIVVY, *n (col)* - a civilian. The plural **civvies** refers to civilian dress as opposed to uniform. The phrase **CIVVY STREET** means civilian life and work. *In the army your job's secure, whereas in civvy street they can give you the sack any time they like.*

CLANGER, *n* - a blunder, a faux pas, a conspicuous mistake, especially in the phrase **DROP A CLANGER**. *I realise I dropped a clanger asking about his wife, but how was I to know she'd left him.*

CLAPPED-OUT, *adj (col)* - worn out, dilapidated,

CLAPPERS

especially referring to machinery. *There was this clapped-out farmhouse right on the border* (John le Carré).

CLAPPERS, *pl n (col)* - in the expression **GO OR RUN LIKE THE CLAPPERS**: to move extremely fast. *Realising this was likely to be the last bus, I ran like the clappers to catch it.*

CLARET, *n* - a dry red wine, especially one from the Bordeaux region of France.

CLASS, *n* - a grade in a university degree. *She's got a second-class honours degree in economics.*

CLEARWAY, *n* - a stretch of highway on which drivers may stop only in an emergency.

CLEVER, *adj (col)* - sly, cunning. *It's a clever little gadget.*

CLEVER DICK or **CLEVERDICK**, *n* - a person who is obnoxiously opinionated or self-satisfied, a know-it-all.

CLINIC, *n* - a private hospital or nursing home.

CLINK, *n* - a pointed steel tool used for breaking up the surface of a road before it is repaired.

CLIPPIE, *n (col)* - a bus conductress. Her main function is to issue tickets and collect fares.

CLOAKROOM, *n* - 1. checkroom. A cloakroom attendant is a hat check girl. 2. often a euphemistic word for toilet.

CLOBBER, *n (col)* - personal belongings, especially clothes and equipment.

CLOSE, *n* - a courtyard or quadrangle enclosed by buildings or an entry leading to such a courtyard. When used as part of a streetname, e.g. *Burnside Close*, it signifies a quiet residential road.

CLOSE-DOWN, *n* - the end of a period of radio or television broadcasting, especially late at night.

CLOT, *n* - a stupid person, fool.

CLOTH CAP, *n* - a flat cap with a stiff peak, now a symbol of working-class ethos or origin. Used as a modifier: *cloth-cap attitudes.*

CLOTHES PEG, *n* - a clothespin.

CLOTTED CREAM, *n* - a thick cream made from scalded milk, especially in SW England.

CLUB, *n* - in the expression **IN THE CLUB**: pregnant.

CLUED-UP, *adj (col)* - having detailed knowl-

COMBINATIONS

edge or information about something. *He's really clued-up on the technical aspects of the deal.*

CLUELESS, *adj (col)* - helpless, ignorant, stupid, incapable of doing anything properly.

CO-ED, *n* - not a student, but a school or college providing coeducation.

COACH, *n* - a long-distance bus.

COAL HOLE, *n* - a small coal cellar.

COAST, *n* - the seaside. *They went down to the coast for the day.*

COASTER, *n* - a vessel engaged in coastal commerce.

COB or **COB LOAF**, *n* - a round loaf of bread.

COBBLERS, *pl n (col)* - a slang word for testicles but mainly used figuratively, like balls, to mean rubbish, nonsense. *He has an alibi but it's a load of old cobblers.* As an interjection, the word expresses strong disagreement.

COCK, *n (col)* - nonsense. The US equivalent is bull.

COCKNEY, *n* - a working-class native of the East End of London, speaking a characteristic dialect of English, or the dialect itself. A Cockney is traditionally defined as someone born within the sound of the bells of St Mary-le-Bow church. Also used as an adjective.

COCKUP, *n (col)* - the same as a **BALLS-UP**, i.e. something done badly. To **COCK SOMETHING UP** is to botch it.

COD, *v (col)* - to make fun of, tease. As a noun: a hoax or trick.

CODSWALLOP, *n (col)* - nonsense.

COLLAR STIFFENER, *n* - a collar stay. A collar stud is a collar button.

COLLIER, *n* - 1. a coal miner. A **COLLIERY** is a coal mine. 2. a ship which transports coal or a member of its crew.

COLONEL BLIMP, *n* - see **BLIMP**.

COLONIES, THE, *pl n* - the territories which formerly comprised the British Empire.

COLOUR SUPPLEMENT, *n* - an illustrated magazine accompanying a newspaper, especially a Sunday paper.

COMBINATIONS, *pl n* - a union suit. Often shortened to **COMBS** or **COMS**.

COME

COME, *v (col)* - to play the part of. *I'll give you a piece of advice, sonny - don't come the old soldier with me.*

COME UP, *n* - to begin one's first term at a college or university. To **COME DOWN** is to leave university.

COMFORTER, *n* - a woolen scarf.

COMMISSIONAIRE, *n* - a uniformed doorman at a hotel, theater, etc.

COMMON, *n* - a tract of open public land, especially one now used as a recreational area.

COMMON-OR-GARDEN, *adj (old)* - ordinary, unexceptional.

COMMONS, THE, *n* - short for the House of Commons.

COMMUNICATION CORD, *n* - a chain or cord in a train which may be pulled by a passenger to stop the train in an emergency.

COMMUNITY HOME, *n* - a reform school for young offenders. Its formal name is *community home with education on the premises*.

COMPANY SECRETARY, *n* - an officer of an incorporated company who has certain legal obligations.

COMPENDIUM, *n* - 1. a book containing a collection of useful hints. 2. a selection of different games in one container.

COMPERE, *n* - a master of ceremonies who introduces cabaret or television acts. Also used as a verb.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL, *n* - a public high school for children of all abilities.

CONK, *n (col)* - nose.

CONKER, *n* - a horse chestnut. **CONKERS** is a schoolboy game in which one player swings a chestnut, threaded onto a string, against that of an opponent to try to break it.

CONSENTING ADULT, *n* - a man over the age of twenty-one, who may legally engage in homosexual behaviour in private.

CONSEQUENCES, *n* - a game in which each player writes down a part of a story, folds over the paper, and passes it on to the next player, who continues the story. After several contributions by each player, the resulting nonsensical stories are read out.

CONSERVATIVE, *n* - a supporter or member of

CORNET

the Conservative Party, one of Britain's two major political parties.

CONSTABLE, *n* - a police officer of the lowest rank.

CONSTITUENCY, *n* - a district which sends a representative to Parliament or all the residents of that district. A parliamentary constituency is roughly the equivalent of a congressional district.

CONSULTANT, *n* - a doctor holding the highest appointment in a particular branch of medicine or surgery in a hospital.

CONTENT, *interj* - in the House of Lords, a formal expression of assent. The opposite expression is **NOT CONTENT**.

CONTRACT OUT, *n* - to agree not to participate in something, especially the state pension scheme.

CONVENIENCE, *n* - a euphemism for a public toilet.

CONVERSION, *n* - a house converted into separate apartments.

COOK SHOP, *n* - a store that sells cookery equipment.

COOKER, *n* - 1. another word for a stove. 2. any large sour apple used in cooking.

COP, *v (col)* - to suffer something unpleasant. *You'll cop a clout about the ears if you do that again. He copped 15 years for armed robbery.* In a military context, to **COP** it means to be killed.

COP SHOP, *n (col)* - a police station.

COPY TASTER, *n* - a person who selects or approves text for publication in a magazine or newspaper.

COR, *interj (col)* - an expression of surprise, amazement, admiration, etc. A corruption of *God*. Similarly, **COR BLIMEY** or **GORBLIMEY**, another expression of surprise, is a corruption of *God blind me*. See **BLIMEY**.

CORE SUBJECTS, *pl n* - the three foundation subjects that are compulsory throughout each KEY STAGE in the NATIONAL CURRICULUM, viz. English, mathematics and science.

CORN, *n* - any cereal plant.

CORNEBEEF, *n* - processed and canned meat. US corned beef = GB salt beef.

CORNET, *n* - an ice-cream cone.

CORN FLOUR

CS GAS

CORN FLOUR, *n* - cornstarch.

CORPORATION, *n* - the municipal authorities of a city or town. *He works for the corporation.*

COSH, *n* - a blunt weapon, often made of hard rubber, a blackjack. As a verb, to sap with this weapon.

COT, *n* - a boxlike bed for a small child, usually with vertical bars. A crib. US cot = GB camp bed. **COT DEATH** (sudden infant death syndrome) is crib death.

COTTAGE FLAT, *n* - an apartment in a two-storey house that is divided into four apartments, two on each floor.

COTTAGING, *n* (*col*) - homosexual activity between men in a public toilet.

COTTON, *n* - another word for thread. A **COTTON REEL** is a spool of thread.

COTTON WOOL, *n* - absorbent cotton, cotton batting.

COUNCIL, *n* - the local governing authority of a town, county, etc.

COUNCIL FLAT or **COUNCIL HOUSE**, *n* - an apartment or house provided by a local council at a subsidized rent, usually to working-class families.

COUNTERFOIL, *n* - the stub of a cheque, receipt, postal order, etc.

COUNTRY, *n* - in the expression **GO TO THE COUNTRY**: to dissolve Parliament and hold an election.

COURGETTES, *pl n* - zucchini.

COURSING, *n* - the hunting of hares with hounds.

COURT OF INQUIRY, *n* - a group of people appointed to investigate the causes of a disaster, an accident, etc.

COURT SHOE, *n* - a pump.

COVENTRY, *n* - in the expression **SEND TO COVENTRY**: to ostracize or ignore someone. *They punished her by sending her to Coventry for the rest of the summer holidays.*

COW GUM, *n* - rubber cement. A trademark.

CRACKERS, *adj* (*col*) - insane.

CRANWELL, *n* - the Royal Air Force College.

CRASH, *v* (*col*) - short for gate-crash.

CRAYFISH, *n* - crawfish.

CREAM CRACKER, *n* - a soda cracker, often

eaten with cheese.

CRÈCHE, *n* - a day nursery for very young children. A French word, pronounced *crash*.

CREEK, *n* - a narrow inlet or bay, especially of the sea.

CREMATOR, *n* - a furnace for cremating corpses, an incinerator, found in a **CREMATORIUM**.

CRESCENT, *n* - a crescent-shaped street, usually lined with houses of the same style. *They live in Hillside Crescent.*

CRIB, *n* - 1. an infant's bed. 2. a list of answers used illicitly in an examination, a pony. Used as a verb, it means to copy from another student.

CRINGE-MAKING, *adj* (*col, old*) - causing feelings of acute embarrassment or distaste.

CRISPBREAD, *n* - a cracker made of wheat or rye.

CRISPS, *pl n* - potato chips.

CROCK, *n* (*col*) - a person or car that is old and decrepit, especially in the phrase **OLD CROCK**. *What's a sweet young thing like her doing with an old crock like him?*

CROCKED, *adj* (*col*) - not drunk but injured.

CROCODILE, *n* (*col*) - a line of schoolchildren walking two by two.

CROFT, *n* - a small enclosed plot of land, adjoining a house, worked by the occupier and his family, especially in Scotland. A person who farms in this way is a **CROFTER**.

CROSSTALK, *n* - rapid or witty talk or conversation.

CRUISERWEIGHT, *n* - in boxing, another term for a light heavyweight.

CRUMBLE, *n* - a baked pudding consisting of a crumbly mixture of flour, fat and sugar over stewed fruit, e.g. apples or rhubarb.

CRUMPET, *n* - 1. a light soft yeast cake, eaten toasted and buttered. 2. (*col*) sex, or a sexually desirable woman, especially in the expression **A PIECE OF CRUMPET**.

CRUSH BARRIER, *n* - a barrier erected to separate section of large crowds to prevent crushing.

CS GAS, *n* - a riot gas used in civil disturbances. It causes tears, salivation and painful breathing. Comparable to mace.

CUP FINAL, THE

DENIZEN

CUP FINAL, THE, *n* - the annual final of the FA Cup soccer competition for the national championship, played at Wembley.

CUPBOARD, *n* - a closet.

CUPPA OR CUPPER, *n (col)* - a cup of tea.

CURRENT ACCOUNT, *n* - a checking account at a bank.

CUSHY, *adj (col)* - easy, comfortable. *A cushy job*. From a Hindi word meaning pleasant.

CUT UP ROUGH, *n (col)* - to become angry or bad-tempered.

CUTTHROAT OR CUTTHROAT RAZOR, *n* - a straight razor.

CUTTING, *n* - a clipping from a newspaper, or, in the horticultural sense, from a plant.

D

D-NOTICE, *n* - an official notice sent to newspapers, prohibiting the publication of certain security information.

DAB, *n (col)* - a fingerprint.

DAB HAND, *n (col)* - a person who is particularly skilled at something. *Get Alan to do it - he's a dab hand at hanging wallpaper*.

DADDY-LONGLEGS, *n (col)* - another name for a crane fly.

DAFT, *adj (col)* - foolish, simple, stupid.

DAILY, *n* - another name for a CHARWOMAN.

DAILY DOZEN, *n* - regular physical exercises.

DAME, *n* - 1. the title of a woman who has been awarded the Order of the British Empire as well as certain other orders of chivalry equivalent to a knighthood. Also the legal title of the wife or widow of a knight or baronet. *Dame Elizabeth*. 2. the role of a comic old woman in a pantomime, usually played by a man.

DAMN-ALL, *n (col)* - absolutely nothing. See ALL.

DAMPCOURSE, *n* - a horizontal layer of impervious material in a brick wall, close to the ground, to protect against moisture rising.

DARBIES, *pl n (col, old)* - handcuffs.

DARBY AND JOAN, *n* - an ideal elderly married couple, archetypal of domestic harmony and contentment. A **DARBY AND JOAN CLUB** is one for elderly people. The original couple existed in an 18th-century English ballad.

DARTMOUTH, *n* - home of the Royal Naval College. Equivalent of Annapolis.

DAVENPORT, *n* - a tall narrow desk with a slanted writing surface and drawers at the side.

DAY RELEASE, *n* - a system whereby workers are released for part-time education without loss of pay.

DAYBOY, *n* - a boy who attends a boarding school daily, but returns home each evening. Cf. BOARDER.

DAYCARE, *n* - treatment or supervision during the working day for people who might be at risk if left on their own, usually provided by a local authority or health service.

DEAD, *adv (col)* - very or exactly. *The exam was dead easy. They were running dead level until the last few seconds of the race*. If something is **DEAD ON**, it is exactly right.

DEATH DUTY, *pl n* - formerly, a tax on property inheritance comparable to estate tax. Now called inheritance tax, although the older term survives, especially in the plural.

DEBAG, *n (col)* - to remove someone's pants by force, usually as a prank. See BAGS.

DECORATOR, *n* - a professional house-painter and paper-hanger.

DEED POLL, *n* - a legal declaration made by one party only, used when a person changes his name.

DEKKO, *n (col)* - a look, glance, view. *Let him have a dekkko at the photo, maybe he knows her*.

DEMERARA, *n* - a brown crystallized cane sugar from the West Indies.

DEMO, *n (col)* - short for demonstration.

DEMOB, *n & v (col, old)* - short for demobilize and demobilization, meaning discharge from the services.

DEMOCRAT, *n* - a member or supporter of the Social and Liberal Democratic Party.

DENIZEN, *n* - an individual permanently resi-

DEPOSIT ACCOUNT

DOINGS

dent in a foreign country where he enjoys certain rights of citizenship.

DEPOSIT ACCOUNT, *n* - a savings account.

DEPOT, *n* - a building used for the storage and servicing of buses or railroad engines.

DERV, *n* - another name for diesel oil when used for road transport.

DESELECT, *v* - of a constituency organization, to refuse to select an existing MP for re-election.

DETACHED, *adj* - of a house, standing apart, not connected to another house. In Britain **SEMI-DETACHED HOUSES** or **SEMS**, i.e. houses separated on one side and joined on the other, are very common. *In thirty years of nuclear power generation, this country has produced enough high level waste to fill a pair of semi-detached houses.*

DEWDROP, *n* - euphemistically, a drop of mucus on the end of one's nose.

DIABOLICAL, *adj (col)* - excruciatingly bad or outrageous. *His Japanese is diabolical. It had been a diabolical conspiracy on the part of the police, the prosecution, the judge; they were all actively involved* (G.F. Newman).

DIAL, *n (col)* - face.

DIBBLE, *n* - a small hand tool used to make holes in the ground for planting seeds, bulbs and roots.

DICEY, *adj (col)* - difficult, dangerous, risky, tricky.

DICKY, *adj (col)* - in a bad condition, shaky, unsteady, unreliable. *I feel a bit dicky today. He has a dicky heart.*

DICKY BOW, *n (col)* - a bow tie.

DIDDLE, *n* - to swindle, gyp.

DIFFERENTIAL, *n* - the difference between rates of pay for different types of labor, especially when forming a pay structure within an industry.

DIGESTIVE BISCUIT, *n* - a soft, whole-meal cookie.

DIGS, *pl n (col)* - lodgings.

DINKY, *adj (col)* - small and neat, dainty.

DINNER JACKET, *n* - a tuxedo.

DINNER LADY, *n (col)* - a female cook or canteen worker in a school.

DIRECT LABOUR, *n* - workers who are part of an employer's own labor force rather than hired through a contractor, e.g. construction workers employed by a local authority.

DIRECTORY INQUIRIES, *n* - information (on the telephone).

DIRTY, *n (col)* - in the expression **DO THE DIRTY ON SOMEONE**: to behave meanly or unkindly towards someone.

DISCOUNT HOUSE, *n (col)* - a financial organization engaged in discounting bills of exchange, etc. on a large scale, primarily by borrowing call money from commercial banks.

DISHY, *adj (col)* - good-looking, attractive. Used by women to describe men. *I saw this really dishy bloke in the pub last night.*

DITHER, *v* - to be uncertain or indecisive. *After dithering helplessly for several minutes, he picked up the phone.*

DIVERSION, *n* - detour.

DIY, *n (abbr)* - short for do-it-yourself. **DIY** stores sell everything for the home handyman.

DO, *v (col)* - to treat violently, to assault.

DOCKER, *n (col)* - a longshoreman.

DOCKET, *n (col)* - 1. a piece of paper accompanying a package or other delivery, stating contents, delivery instructions, etc. 2. a customs certificate declaring that duty has been paid.

DODDLE, *n (col)* - something easily accomplished, a pushover. *I'd like to pretend that it took great cunning on my part to smuggle it in, but in fact it was a doddle.*

DODGEM, *n* - another name for a bumper car. A trademark.

DODGY, *adj (col)* - risky, difficult, uncertain, tricky. *Conmen are cashing in on the recession with a record number of dodgy cut-price deals and get-rich-quick schemes.* Synonymous with **DICEY**.

DOGS, *pl n (col)* - greyhound racing.

DOGSBODY, *n (col)* - a person who does menial work.

DOINGS, *pl n (col)* - anything of which the name is not known or euphemistically left unsaid. *Have you brought the doings for unblock-*

ing the sink?

DOLE, *n* - money received from the state while out of work. To be **ON THE DOLE** means to be unemployed and receiving such money.

DON, *n* - a member of the teaching staff at a university or college, especially at Oxford or Cambridge.

DONKEY'S YEARS, *n (col)* - a long time. *It's been donkey's years since I've seen her.*

DORMITORY, *n* - not a building but a room in which a lot of people sleep. US dormitory = GB hall of residence.

DORMITORY SUBURB, *adj* - an area from which most of the residents commute to work.

Doss, *v (col)* - to sleep rough. *All the poor bugger was looking for was a place to doss down for the night.* A **DOSSE** is usually a homeless person. A **DOSHOUSE** is a flop-house.

DOTTY, *adj (col)* - feeble-minded, eccentric, slightly crazy. To be **DOTTY ABOUT** something is to be extremely fond of it.

DOUBLE DUTCH, *n (col)* - gibberish, incomprehensible talk.

DOUBLE FIRST, *n* - a first-class honours degree in two subjects.

DOUBLE SAUCEPAN, *n* - a double boiler.

DOUBLE-DECKER, *n* - a bus with two passenger decks.

DOWNING STREET, *n* - the small London street where the Prime Minister officially resides. Nearly all prime ministers have lived at No. 10 Downing St. since the early 1700's.

DOWNPIPE OR **DRAINPIPE**, *n* - a downspout.

DOZY, *adj (col)* - stupid.

DRAPER, *n* - a dealer in fabrics and sewing materials. A **DRAPER'S** is a drygoods store.

DRAUGHT EXCLUDER, *n* - weather stripping.

DRAUGHTS, *n* - checkers. Played on a **DRAUGHTBOARD**. A checker is a **DRAUGHTSMAN**. Pronounced *drafts*.

DRAWING PIN, *n* - a thumbtack.

DRESSER, *n* - a person who assists a surgeon during an operation.

DRESSING GOWN, *n* - a bathrobe.

DRINKING-UP TIME, *n* - the time allowed to finish drinks before a pub closes.

DRIVE, *n* - a large gathering of people to play

cards, e.g. *a whist drive, a beetle drive.*

DRONE, *n* - a person who lives off the work of others.

DRY, *n* - a hard-line Conservative. See **WET**.

DSO, *n (abbr)* - Distinguished Service Order.

DUAL CARRIAGEWAY, *n* - a divided highway.

DUCK OR **DUCK'S EGG**, *n* - in cricket, a score of nothing by a batsman. Cf. US goose egg.

DUCKS OR **DUCKY**, *n (col)* - dear, darling. Used as a term of endearment, often between perfect strangers.

DUFF, *adj (col)* - bad, useless, not working. *A duff idea, a duff engine.*

DUMBWAITER, *n* - a stand placed near a dining table to hold food, and also a lazy Susan.

DUMMY, *n* - a baby's pacifier.

DUNDEE CAKE, *n* - a rich fruit cake decorated with almonds.

DUNGAREES, *pl n* - overalls.

DUREX, *n* - the best-known brand of British condom. Cf. US Trojan.

DUSTBIN, *n* - a garbage can, trash can.

DUSTMAN, *n* - a garbage collector.

DUTCH BARN, *n* - a farm building consisting of a steel frame and a curved roof.

DYNAMO, *n* - another name for a generator.

E

EACH WAY OR **BOTH WAYS**, *adj & adv* - (of a bet in horse racing) made on the same horse to win, place or show. Across-the-board.

EARLY CLOSING, *n* - the shutting of most of the shops in a town one afternoon a week or the day on which this happens. *Wednesday is early closing in Ballymena.* As an adjective: *early-closing day.*

EARTH, *n* - an electrical ground. An **EARTH WIRE** is a ground wire.

EAST END, *THE*, *n* - a densely populated part of London, containing former industrial and dock areas and most of the older and poorer neighborhoods.

ELASTIC BAND

ELASTIC BAND, *n* - a rubber band.

ELEVENSES, *pl n (col)* - a light snack, usually with tea or coffee, taken in mid-morning.

EMPLOYMENT OFFICE, *n* - a government office whose function is to collect and provide the unemployed with information about job vacancies. Formerly, a labour exchange. Cf. **JOB CENTRE**.

ENCLOSURE, *n* - a section of a sports ground or race track reserved for certain spectators. *Stewards never die; they scull to the Great Enclosure in the Sky.*

ENDORSE, *v* - to record a conviction on a driver's license.

ENGAGED, *adj* - of a telephone line, busy. The **ENGAGED TONE** is the busy signal.

ENUMERATOR, *n* - a person who issues and retrieves forms during a census of population.

EPILOGUE, *n* - the final program of the day on a television station, often of a religious nature.

EPISCOPAL or **EPIDIASCOPE**, *n* - an opaque projector.

EPISTEMICS, *n* - the interdisciplinary study of knowledge and human information-processing, using the formal techniques of logic, linguistics, philosophy and psychology.

ESTATE CAR, *n* - another name for a station wagon.

EVE'S PUDDING, *n* - a baked sponge cake with a layer of apple at the bottom.

EVER, *adv* - used as an intensifier in the phrases **EVER SO**, **EVER SUCH** and **EVER SUCH A**: *It was ever so good. We had ever such bad weather. It's ever such a waste.*

EX WORKS, *adv & adj* - excluding the cost of delivery from the factory to the customer. A common commercial term. *The price is £10,000 ex works.*

EX-DIRECTORY, *adj* - of a telephone number, unlisted.

EX-SERVICEMAN, *n* - a veteran. In British English the word 'veteran' connotes advanced age and long service.

EXHIBITION, *n* - an allowance or scholarship awarded to a student at a university or

school. The student is then an **EXHIBITIONER**.

EXOR., *n (abbr)* - executor.

EYETIE, *n & adj (col)* - slang for Italian.

F

FACE CLOTH or **FACE FLANNEL**, *n* - a washcloth.

FAFF ABOUT, *v (col)* - to act indecisively, to fuss.

FAG, *n (col)* - 1. a cigarette. A **FAG END** is the stub of a cigarette. 2. formerly, a student at a British public school who was required to perform menial tasks for a student in a higher class.

FAIR or **FUNFAIR**, *n* - a carnival.

FAMILY DIVISION, *n* - a division of the High Court of Justice dealing with divorce, the custody of children, etc.

FANCY, *v (col)* - to like or be physically attracted to another person. *I think she fancies you.*

FANNY, *n* - not the buttocks but the female pudendum.

FANNY ADAMS or **SWEET FANNY ADAMS**, *n (col)* - nothing at all, absolutely nothing. The term is now a euphemism for *fuck all* or *sweet fuck all*. It derives from the name of a 19th-century murder victim, whose body was cut up into small pieces. The case was well publicized and sailors in the Royal Navy began to refer to the canned chopped meat they were being served as Fanny Adams, inferring it was not worth eating. By degrees the term took on its present meaning.

FARINA, *n* - starch, especially prepared from potato flour.

FARMHOUSE LOAF, *n* - a large white loaf with slightly curved sides and top.

FASCIA, *n* - another, less common name for dashboard.

FATHER CHRISTMAS, *n* - another name for Santa Claus.

FEN, *n* - low-lying, flat, marshy land.

FESTER, *v (col)* - to be idle or inactive.

FÊTE, *n* - a village fair.

FIDDLE

FIDDLE, *n (col)* - an illegal or fraudulent transaction or arrangement. Also used as a verb. *He's been fiddling his expense claims for years.* To be **ON THE FIDDLE** is to be engaged in fraudulent transactions.

FIDEI DEFENSOR, *n* - Latin: defender of the faith. This was the title given to Henry VIII by Pope Leo X. It appears on modern British coins as **FD**.

FILL IN, *v (col)* - to attack and injure someone severely.

FILMSETTING, *n* - photocomposition, photosetting.

FILTER, *n* - a traffic signal permitting cars to turn either left or right when the main signals are red.

FILTH, *n (col)* - underworld slang for the police. The adjective **FILTHY** has a much wider application, meaning extremely unpleasant. *What filthy weather, eh?*

FIN, *n* - a plane's vertical stabilizer.

FINANCIAL YEAR, *n* - the fiscal year.

FINGER, *n (col)* - in the expression **PULL ONE'S FINGER OUT**: to begin or to speed up activity, especially after initial delay or slackness.

FIRE BRIGADE, *n* - the fire department.

FIRST, *n* - a university degree with first-class honors, the highest class.

FISH SLICE, *n* - a kitchen spatula, a pancake turner.

FISHMONGER, *n* - a retailer of fish. *I've got to go to the fishmonger's.*

FIT UP, *v (col)* - to incriminate someone on a false charge, to frame. *The filth fitted him up for the Romford bank job.* A **FIT-UP** is a frame-up.

FITTED CARPET, *n* - wall-to-wall carpeting.

FIXTURE, *n* - a scheduled sporting event.

FLAG, *n* - the part of a taximeter that is raised when a taxi is for hire.

FLAKE OUT, *v (col)* - to collapse or fall asleep because of exhaustion.

FLAMING, *adj (col)* - see **BLOOMING**.

FLANNEL, *v (col)* - to talk evasively or to flatter in order to mislead. As a noun, it means evasive talk or deceiving flattery. *He gave us no flannel, but, on the contrary, told us exactly what we needed to know.*

FRIGATE

FLASHER, *n (col)* - a person who indecently exposes himself. The verb is to **FLASH**.

FLAT, *n* - an apartment. A **FLATMATE** is a person with whom one shares a flat.

FLEET STREET, *n* - British journalism. Many newspaper offices were formerly situated in this central London street.

FLEX, *n* - flexible insulated electric cord.

FLICK KNIFE, *n* - a switchblade.

FLIPPING, *adj (col)* - see **BLOOMING**.

FLIT, *v (col)* - to depart hurriedly and stealthily in order to avoid obligations. Also **DO A FLIT**, which has the same meaning.

FLOAT, *n* - a flutterboard.

FLOG, *v (col)* - to sell. *Subtlety is the key - trying to flog a vacuum cleaner at a dinner party is clearly out.* The expression **FLOG A DEAD HORSE** means to harp on some long discarded subject.

FLUTTER, *n* - a small bet or wager. *With or without the customary flutter, the Grand National is part of British life.*

FLY, *adj (col)* - sharp-witted and wily.

FLYOVER, *n* - an overpass.

FOOLSCAP, *n* - a size of writing paper, 13.5 by 17 inches.

FOOTBALL, *n* - soccer.

FOOTPATH, *n* - in common usage a synonym for pavement, i.e. the sidewalk.

FOOTSTEPS EDITOR, *n* - in film-making, a foley or foley artist.

FORM, *n* - 1. a grade in a secondary school. *What form is he in?* 2. the track record of a horse, an athlete, etc. 3. *(col)* - a criminal record.

FOUNDATION SUBJECTS, *pl n* - the subjects studied as part of the **NATIONAL CURRICULUM**, including the compulsory **CORE SUBJECTS**.

FREE CHURCH, *n* - any Protestant Church, especially the Presbyterian, other than the Church of England.

FREE HOUSE, *n* - a pub not bound to sell only one brewer's products.

FREEPHONE, *n* - toll free. A trademark.

FRENCH STICK, *n* - a long straight stick loaf.

FRENCH WINDOWS, *pl n* - French doors.

FRIESIAN, *n* - a breed of dairy cattle, Holstein.

FRIGATE, *n* - a warship larger than a corvette

FRINGE

GEORGE

and smaller than a destroyer.

FRINGE, *n* - bangs.

FROGMARCH, *n* - a method of carrying a resisting person horizontally and face downwards. Also used as a verb.

FRONT BENCH, *n* - in the House of Commons, the foremost bench of either the Government or Opposition. A **FRONTBENCHER** is a member of the leadership of either group. See **BACKBENCHER**.

FRUITCAKE, *n* (*col*) - an eccentric or insane person.

FRUITERER, *n* - a fruit seller.

FRUITY, *adj* (*col*) - erotically stimulating, salacious.

FULL STOP, *n* - at the end of a sentence, a period.

FUNFAIR, *n* - an amusement park or fairground.

FUNK OR BLUE FUNK, *n* - a state of nervousness, fear or depression.

FUNNY BONE, *n* - crazy bone.

FUR, *n* - a deposit of calcium carbonate precipitated from hard water onto the insides of pipes, boilers and kettles.

FUSSPOT, *n* - a fussbudget.

G

GAFF, *n* (*col*) - in the expression **BLOW THE GAFF**: to spill the beans.

GAFFER, *n* (*col*) - 1. a boss, a foreman, the owner of a factory, etc. *You'll have to ask the gaffer.* 2. an old man.

GAFFER TAPE, *n* - strong adhesive tape used in electrical repairs.

GALA, *n* - a sporting occasion involving competitions in several events. *A swimming gala.*

GALLON, *n* - GB 1 gallon = US 1.20 gallons.

GAME, *n* (*col*) - prostitution, especially in the phrase **ON THE GAME**. *They lure young Russian girls over here with all kind of promises, then put them on the game.*

GAMMON, *n* (*col, old*) - deceitful nonsense,

humbug.

GAMMY, *adj* (*col*) - gimp.

GAMP, *n* (*col, old*) - an umbrella.

GANGER, *n* - the foreman of a gang of laborers.

GANGWAY, *n* - an aisle between rows of seats.

GARDEN, *n* - a yard, i.e. any plot of ground with grass or plants, regardless of size, adjoining a house. In GB, a yard is paved with concrete.

GARIBALDI, *n* - a type of cookie with a layer of raisins in the center.

GAWP, *v* (*col*) - to stare stupidly, gape, rubberneck.

GAZETTE, *n* - an announcement in an official journal. As a verb, to publish such an announcement.

GAZUMP, *v* - to raise the price of something, especially a house, after verbally agreeing a price with an intending buyer. A related verb is to **GAZUNDER**: to reduce an offer on a property immediately before exchanging contracts, having previously agreed a higher price with the seller.

GBH, *n* (*abbr*) - grievous bodily harm.

GCSE, *n* (*abbr*) - General Certificate of Secondary Education, a public examination in specified subjects for 16-year-old schoolchildren. It replaced GCE O-level.

GEAR LEVER, *n* - gear shift.

GEN, *n* (*col*) - information. *I'd like to get the gen on any new projects they're working on.* To **GEN UP ON** something is to study it in detail, to become fully conversant with it. *I can't accept these responsibilities if I'm not properly genned up.*

GENTRIFICATION, *n* - the process whereby middle-class people move into traditionally working-class areas of a city, so changing the character of the area.

ENTRY, *n* - persons just below the nobility in social rank. The word is often used derogatorily.

GENTS, *n* (*col*) - a public toilet for men.

GEORDIE, *n* (*col*) - a person from Tyneside, the area around Newcastle in northeast England.

GEORGE, *n* (*col*) - the automatic pilot in an

GEORGE CROSS

GUMDROP

aircraft.

GEORGE CROSS or (*abbr*) **GC**, *n* - an award for bravery, especially of civilians.

GET ALONG, *interj (col)* - an exclamation of mild disbelief.

GET CRACKING, *v (col)* to start doing something quickly.

GET KNOTTED!, *v (col)* - see **STUFF**.

GET OFF WITH, *v (col)* - to establish an amorous or sexual relationship with someone.

GET or GIT, *n (col)* - a worthless, contemptible person, a bastard.

GEYSER, *n* - a domestic hot water heater.

GIRL GUIDE, *n* - a Girl Scout.

GIRO, *n (col)* - an unemployment or welfare payment by giro cheque.

GLASSHOUSE, *n* - 1. a greenhouse. 2. (*col*) a military prison. US glasshouse = GB glass-works.

GO DOWN, *v* - 1. to leave university. *He went down without taking a degree.* 2. (*col*) - to go to prison for a specified period. *He went down for twenty years for rape with trimmings.*

GO OFF, *v (col)* 1. of food, milk, etc., to become stale, rotten or sour. 2. to stop liking. *But after their marriage, she went right off him.*

GO ON FOR, *v* - to approach a time, an age, an amount, etc. *I'm not sure how old he is, but he must be going on for seventy.*

GO UP, *v* - to go or return to university at the beginning of a term or academic year. See **GO DOWN**.

GO WITHOUT, *v* - to be denied or deprived of something, especially food. *Well, if you don't like porridge, you can go without.*

GO-SLOW, *n* - in a labor conflict, a slowdown. The verb is **GO SLOW**.

GOB, *n (col)* - mouth. As a verb, it means to spit. A **GOBSTOPPER** is a large, hard candy consisting of different colored concentric layers that are revealed as it is sucked.

GOBSMAKED, *adj (col)* - astounded, amazed.

GOGGLEBOX, *n (col)* - the boob tube.

GOODS, *pl n* - freight, as in *goods train*, *goods wagon* (freight car), *goods lift* (freight elevator), etc.

GOOSE PIMPLES, *pl n* - goose bumps.

GOOSEBERRY, *n (col)* - an unwanted third person with a couple, especially in the phrase **PLAY GOOSEBERRY**.

GORMLESS, *adj (col)* - stupid, dull, lacking vitality.

GOVERNOR, *n (col)* - a boss or the warden of a prison. The word and its shortened form *guv* are used as a form of respectful address from man to man. *I'd like to give you a better price, but I don't think my governor would agree to it. What can I do for you, guv?*

GRADIENT, *n* - the grade on a road.

GRAMMAR SCHOOL, *n* - a state-maintained secondary school providing an education with an academic bias for selected children, covering roughly the sixth through the twelfth grades. Most grammar schools were abolished in the 1970s by the socialists and replaced by **COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS**.

GRANGE, *n* - a farmhouse or country house with its various outbuildings.

GRASS, *n* - a police informer, a snitch. Also a verb: *How do you think we found you? You were grassed, my old son, that's how.*

GREASEPROOF PAPER, *n* - wax paper.

GREASER, *n (col)* - a car mechanic or a semi-skilled engine attendant aboard a merchant ship.

GREEN FINGERS, *pl n* - green thumbs.

GREEN PEPPER, *n* - a bell pepper.

GREENGROCER, *n* - a retail seller of fresh fruits and vegetables, but not other foods.

GRIDDLE, *n* - a thick round iron plate with a half hoop handle over the top, for making scones, etc. Also a verb.

GRILL, *v* - to broil.

GRISKIN, *n* - the lean part of a loin of pork.

GRITTER, *n* - a vehicle which spreads grit on roads during icy weather.

GROUND FLOOR, *n* - the first floor.

GUARD, *n* - the official in charge of a train.

GUILDHALL, *n* - the meeting hall of a guild or a town hall.

GUMDROP, *n* - a small candy made of sweetened, colored and flavored gum arabic. Often coated with coarse granulated sugar.

GUMPTION

GUMPTION, *n (col)* - common sense, initiative or resourcefulness. *He doesn't have the gumption to come in when it rains.*

GUV, *n (col)* - see GOVERNOR.

GUY FAWKES NIGHT, *n* - November 5, celebrated with bonfires and fireworks. It commemorates the foiling of the plot led by Guy Fawkes in 1605 to blow up the Houses of Parliament and its occupants, including the king. A **GUY** is a crude effigy of Guy Fawkes, usually made of old clothes stuffed with straw and rags, and burnt on top of a bonfire.

GYMKHANA, *n* - a meet at which contests are held to test the skill of the competitors, e.g. in equestrianism, gymnastics, or sports car racing.

H

H, *adj (abbr)* - on pencils, the letter signifies the degree of hardness of the lead: H, 2H, 3H. **HB** stands for hard-black, denoting a medium-hard lead.

HABERDASHER, *n* - not a seller of men's clothing, but of small articles for sewing, e.g. buttons, zips, ribbons, thread, etc.

HAIR, *n (col)* - in the expression **KEEP YOUR HAIR ON!**: don't get excited, keep calm.

HAIR SLIDE, *n* - a barette.

HAIRGRIP, *n* - a bobby pin.

HAIRLESS, *adj (col)* - very angry, raging.

HAKE, *n* - a fish related to and resembling the cod.

HALF, *n (col)* - in the adverbial expression **NOT HALF**: really, very, indeed. *He's not half clever.*

HALF SEAS OVER, *adj (col)* - drunk.

HALF TERM, *n* - a short holiday midway through an academic term.

HALLMARK, *n* - an official series of marks stamped by the London Guild of Goldsmiths on gold, silver, or platinum articles to guarantee purity.

HOCKEY

HAMMER, *v* - to criticize severely.

HAMPER, *n* - a large basket and the food it usually contains.

HARD, *adj (col)* - incorrigible or disreputable, especially in the phrase **A HARD CASE**.

HARD CHEESE, *sent sub (col)* - bad luck. Another common expression with exactly the same meaning is **HARD LINES**.

HARLEY STREET, *n* - a street in central London famous for the large number of medical specialists who have their offices there.

HARVEST HOME, *n* - a harvest supper.

HASTY PUDDING, *n* - a simple pudding made from milk thickened with tapioca, semolina, etc., and sweetened.

HAT TRICK, *n* - in cricket, the achievement of a bowler in taking three wickets with three successive balls. Generally, any three successive successes. *McHugh scored three fine goals and only narrowly missed a hat trick.*

HAVE IT OFF OR HAVE IT AWAY, *v (col)* - to have sexual intercourse.

HAVE ONE OVER THE EIGHT, *adj (col)* - to be drunk.

HEADMASTER OR HEADMISTRESS, *n* - the principal of a school.

HEATH, *n* - a large open area, usually with sandy soil and scrubby vegetation, especially heather.

HELTER-SKELTER, *n* - a high spiral slide at a fairground.

HERDSMAN, *n* - a herder of livestock.

HIDE, *n* - a hunter's or birder's blind.

HIGH JUMP, *n (col)* - in the expression **BE FOR THE HIGH JUMP**: to be liable to receive a severe reprimand or punishment.

HIGH STREET, *n* - main street. *They had a little flat off Kensington High Street.* Used as a modifier, it means geared to meet the requirements of the general public: *high-street fashion.*

HIPSTERS, *pl n* - hip-huggers.

HIRE OUT, *v* - to pay independent contractors for work to be done.

HIRE-PURCHASE or (*abbr*) **HP**, *n* - instalment plan.

HOARDING, *n* - a billboard.

HOCKEY, *n* - field hockey, mainly a girls' sport

in Britain.

HODMAN, *n* - another name for a hod carrier.

HOLDALL, *n* - a large strong bag, a carryall.

HOLIDAY, *n* - the usual word for a vacation. A

HOLIDAY CAMP is a place, especially near the sea, providing accommodation, recreational facilities and so on for **HOLIDAY-MAKERS**.

HOLS, *pl n (col)* - short for holidays.

HOME AND DRY, *adj (col)* - definitely out of danger or successful. *We won't be home and dry until all the votes have been counted.*

HOME COUNTIES, *pl n* - the counties surrounding London.

HOME OFFICE or (*abbr*) **HO**, *n* - the government department responsible for law and order, immigration, etc. The Home Secretary is in charge of it.

HOMELY, *adj* - warm and domesticated in manner or appearance, or unpretentious. The word is not insulting.

HONK, *v (col)* - to chuck up, vomit.

HONOURS LIST, *n* - a list of those who have had or are having a title conferred on them. There are two new honours lists each year, in January and June, when people receive titles of nobility or membership of one of the various orders of chivalry.

HOOD, *n* - the folding roof of a convertible. US hood = GB bonnet.

HOOK, *n* - in the expression **SLING ONE'S HOOK**: to leave.

HOOPLA, *n* - a carnival game in which a player tries to throw a hoop over an object, thereby winning the object.

HOORAY HENRY, *n (col)* - a derogatory term for a spoiled upper-class young man.

HOOT, *v* - to honk a horn.

HOOTER, *n (col)* - 1. a car horn. 2. a nose.

HOOVER, *v* - to vacuum. Used as a noun, another word for vacuum-cleaner. A trademark.

HORSEBOX, *n* - a trailer used for transporting horses.

HOTPOT, *n* - a baked stew or casserole made with meat or fish and covered with a layer of potatoes.

HOUSE OF LORDS, *n* - the upper house of Par-

liament, made up of members of the nobility and high-ranking clergy.

HOUSE-TRAIN, *v* - to housebreak.

HOUSEHOLD GODS, *pl n (col, old)* - the essentials of domestic life.

HOUSEMAN, *n* - an intern in a hospital.

HOUSING ESTATE, *n* - a planned area of housing, often with its own shops, amenities, and particular social problems. A distinctive feature of urban Britain, a cross between a subdivision and a housing project.

HOVERCRAFT, *n* - an air-cushion vehicle.

HUM, *v (col)* - to smell unpleasant.

HUMBUG, *n* - a hard boiled candy, usually flavored with peppermint and having a striped pattern.

HUMP, *v (col)* - to carry or heave something heavy, especially on the back. *He humped the body down to the river.* As a noun, the word means a fit of depression or sulking. *Just thinking about it gives me the hump. She asked for my opinion and then took the hump when I told her.* The adjective **HUMPY** means angry or gloomy.

HUMPBACK BRIDGE, *n* - a bridge with a sharp incline and decline, usually on a narrow roadway.

HUMPTY, *n* - a low padded seat, a pouffe.

HUMPTY DUMPTY, *n* - a short fat person.

HUNDREDWEIGHT or **LONG HUNDREDWEIGHT**, *n* - 112 pounds (50.802 kilograms), not, as in the US short hundredweight, 100 pounds (45.359 kilograms).

HURLEY, *n* - another name for the game of hurling.

HUSH PUPPY, *n* - a brand of soft suede shoe.

HYPERMARKET, *n* - a huge self-service store, usually built on the outskirts of a town.

I

ICE LOLLY, *n (col)* - popsicle.

ICING SUGAR, *n* - confectioners' sugar.

ILLUMINATIONS, *pl n* - colored lights used as

IMMEDIATELY

JOLLY

decoration in streets, parks, etc.

IMMEDIATELY, *adv* - at the same time as, as soon as. *Immediately he opened the door, the noise of the machines filled the room.*

IMMERSION HEATER, *n* - a device for heating a domestic hot-water tank.

IMMIGRANT, *n* - a person who has been settled for less than ten years in a country of which he is not a native.

INCOME SUPPORT, *n* - a welfare payment for the unemployed and people on low incomes.

INDENT, *v* - to place an order for foreign goods through an agent, or to order goods by purchase order or official requisition. As a noun, it means an official requisition or purchase order for goods.

INDUSTRIAL, *adj* - often used to refer to labor: *an industrial dispute, industrial conditions.*

INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, *n* - an industrial park.

INFANT, *n* - as well as baby, the word can mean a young schoolchild under the age of seven.

INFANT SCHOOL, *n* - school for children aged between 5 and 7. See **PRIMARY SCHOOL**.

INGLENOOK, *n* - a corner by a fireplace, a chimney corner.

INLAND, *adj* - operating within a country, domestic as opposed to foreign.

INSOLVENCY PROVISION, *n* - the right of employees of a company that goes bankrupt to receive money owed to them as wages, etc.

INTERVAL, *n* - an intermission, e.g. between two acts of a play.

INVERTED COMMAS, *pl n* - another name for quotation marks.

INVIGILATE, *v* - to proctor. A person who does so is an **INVIGILATOR**.

J

JAB OR JAG, *n (col)* - an injection, a shot. *Polio jabs.*

JACK, *n (col)* - in the expression **I'M ALL RIGHT, JACK**: a remark indicating smug and com-

placent selfishness. It can be used as a modifier: *an 'I'm all right, Jack' attitude.*

JACKSIE OR JACKSY, *n (col)* - the buttocks or anus, butt, can.

JAKES, *pl n* - a latrine or privy.

JAMMY, *adj (col)* - lucky. *You jammy so-and-so! That was a jammy shot if I ever saw one.*

JAR, *n (col)* - a glass of alcoholic drink, especially beer. *We have time for one more jar before we go back. Why don't we get together for a jar or two one of these evenings?*

JELLY, *n* - 1. jello. 2. *(col)* a slang name for gelignite.

JERKS OR PHYSICAL JERKS, *pl n (col)* - physical exercises.

JIB AT, *n* - to be reluctant to do something, to hold back from, to balk at.

JIGGERY-POKERY, *n (col)* - dishonest or deceitful behavior, trickery. *The Inland Revenue rules are understandably framed to prevent jiggery-pokery.*

JOB, *n (col)* - in the expression **ON THE JOB**: engaged in sexual intercourse.

JOBBER, *n* - a middleman in the exchange of stocks and securities among brokers.

JOBCENTRE, *n* - a government office in the main shopping area of a town in which job-hunters can consult displayed advertisements in informal surroundings. There are hundreds of them throughout the country.

JOE BLOGS OR JOE SOAP, *n (col)* - Joe Blow.

JOHNNY, *n (col)* - 1. a man or boy, a fellow. 2. a condom.

JOINER, *n* - a person trained and skilled in making finished woodwork, e.g. windows, doors, stairs, etc.

JOINT, *n* - a piece of meat for roasting.

JOINT-STOCK COMPANY, *n* - a business enterprise characterized by its separate legal existence and the sharing of ownership between shareholders, whose liability is limited. In a US joint-stock company, owners are issued shares of transferable stock but do not enjoy limited liability.

JOLLY, *adv* - extremely, to a great extent or degree. *He had some jolly interesting things*

JOY

- to say.
- JOY**, *n (col)* - success, satisfaction. *Did you get any joy with that loan you asked for?*
- JUDY**, *n (col)* - a girl or woman.
- JUG**, *n* - a pitcher.
- JUGGERNAUT**, *n* - a very large truck for transporting freight by road, especially one that travels throughout Europe.
- JUMBLE SALE**, *n* - a rummage sale.
- JUMP SEAT**, *n* - a folding seat in a London taxi.
- JUMPER**, *n* - a light pullover.
- JUNIOR SCHOOL**, *n* - school for children aged between 7 and 11. See **PRIMARY SCHOOL**.

K

- KEEN**, *adj* - of prices, extremely low, competitive.
- KEEP**, *v* - to have permanently in stock. *This shop keeps all kinds of wools.*
- KEG**, *n* - an aluminum container in which beer is transported and stored. **KEG BEER** is kept in such a container, infused with gas, and served under pressure.
- KERB**, *n* - a curb. **KERB-CRAWLING** is the act of driving slowly along the edge of the pavement while soliciting a prostitute. A **KERB-CRAWLER** is a person who does this.
- KERFUZZLE**, *n (col)* - commotion, disorder, agitation.
- KEY STAGE**, *n* - in education, one of the four broad age-group divisions to which the **NATIONAL CURRICULUM** applies. These are 5-7, 7-11, 11-14 and 14-16 years.
- KG**, *n (abbr)* - Knight of the Order of the Garter.
- KIDDOLOGY**, *n (col)* - the art of bluffing or deception. Cf. US sayings like *Don't kid a kidder*.
- KING OF THE CASTLE**, *n* - a children's game in which each child tries to stand alone on a mound, sandcastle, etc. by pushing other children off it. By extension, any person who is in a commanding or superior position.

KNOCK-ON

- tion.
- KINK**, *n (col)* - a sexual deviation. The adjective is **KINKY**.
- KIOSK**, *n* - a telephone box.
- KIP**, *n* - sleep, a nap. *I'll leave the baby at your place, so I can get some kip. I feel like a kip.* Also used as a verb: *You can kip in my bed.*
- KIPPER**, *n* - smoked herring.
- KIRBY GRIP**, *n* - a bobby pin.
- KIT OUT**, *v* - to provide with a kit of personal effects and necessities.
- KITTENS**, *pl n (col)* - in the expression **HAVE KITTENS**: to have a cow. Another expression with an identical meaning is **HAVE A CANARY**.
- KNACKERED**, *adj (col)* - exhausted. *Is it much further? I'm knackered.*
- KNEES-UP**, *n (col)* - a lively and noisy celebration, especially one with dancing. Deriving from the Cockney dancing song 'Knees up Mother Brown'.
- KNICKERS**, *pl n* - panties. Colloquially, to **GET ONE'S KNICKERS IN A TWIST** is to become unduly angry or annoyed about something. *I'm not a toy-boy, but if it amuses you to call me that, I'm not going to get my knickers in a twist over it.*
- KNOBS**, *pl n (col)* - in the expression **AND THE SAME TO YOU WITH KNOBS ON**: the same to you but even more so.
- KNOCK BACK**, *v (col)* - to drink, either quickly or in quantity. *I never met anybody who could knock back the beer the way you can.*
- KNOCK OFF**, *v (col)* - to steal.
- KNOCK UP**, *n* - not to make someone pregnant but 1. to wake or rouse someone. *Can you knock me up early tomorrow morning?* 2. to make something quickly or to improvise, e.g. a meal, a set of shelves, etc. *Do you want me to knock you up a few sandwiches?* 3. to warm up before a tennis or squash match.
- KNOCK-ON**, *adj* - resulting indirectly but inevitably from another event or circumstance. *If the factory closes, the 500 people who work here will lose their jobs, and, because of the knock-on effect, so will hundreds of others in the area.*

KNOCKDOWN

KNOCKDOWN, *adj* - cheap. *If you wait until the January sales, you can get them at a knock-down price.*

KNOCKING SHOP, *n (col)* - a brothel.

L

L-DRIVER, *n* - a learner-driver, who must be accompanied by a qualified driver and display L-plates on the car. An **L-PLATE** is a white rectangle with a red 'L' and must be fixed to both the front and the rear of the car.

LABOUR PARTY, *n* - one of the two main political parties in Britain, formed in 1900 to secure adequate parliamentary representation for labor.

LADDER, *n* - a run in hose or stockings.

LADYBIRD, *n* - a ladybug.

LAMPPOST, *n* - a street lamp.

LANDLORD, *n* - a pub-keeper.

LARRY, *n (col)* - in the expression **AS HAPPY AS LARRY**: extremely happy.

LASH OUT OR SPLASH OUT, *v (col)* - to spend money freely or extravagantly. *This year we decided to lash out on a really good holiday, so we're going to India.*

LASHINGS, *pl n (col)* - lavish quantities, especially when referring to food or drink. Roast beef with lashings of gravy.

LAUNDERETTE, *n* - a laundromat. Both words are trademarks.

LAVATORY PAPER, *n* - another name for toilet paper.

LAW CENTRE, *n* - an independent service providing free legal advice and information to the general public and financed by a local authority.

LAY ON, *v* - to install. *I hope they can lay on electricity.*

LAY-BY, *n* - a place for drivers to stop at the side of a highway, a pull-off.

LEADER OR LEADING ARTICLE, *n* - the main editorial in a newspaper.

LOAF

LEAGUE TABLE, *n* - a tabulated comparison of clubs or teams competing in a sporting league. By extension, a comparison of performance, merit, importance, etc. in any competitive situation. *They refer to a league table of wages.*

LEFT-LUGGAGE OFFICE, *n* - a baggage room, checkroom.

LEG-PULL, *n (col)* - a practical joke or mild deception.

LEMON SQUASH, *n* - a drink made from a sweetened lemon concentrate and water.

LET, *v* - to lease or rent property. As a noun, it means the act of renting property or accommodation. The majority of new lets are covered by the rent regulations.

LETTER BOX, *n* - 1. a door slot, usually covered with a hinged flap, through which letters are delivered to a building. 2. a public box into which letters are put for collection and delivery. In the latter sense, also called a **POSTBOX** OR A **PILLAR BOX**.

LEVEL CROSSING, *n* - a grade crossing.

LEVEL PEGGING, *n (col)* - equality between two contestants.

LIBERAL STUDIES, *n* - a supplementary arts course for those specializing in scientific, technical or professional studies.

LICENSING LAWS, *pl n* - the laws governing when and where liquor may be sold.

LID, *n (col)* - in the expression **PUT THE LID ON SOMETHING**: to be the final blow to something.

LIE-IN, *n* - a long stay in bed in the morning.

LIFE PRESERVER, *n* - not a life jacket but a kind of blackjack kept for self-defence.

LIFT, *n* - an elevator.

LIMB, *n (col)* - in the expression **OUT ON A LIMB**: isolated, especially because of unpopular opinions.

LIMITED OR (*abbr*) **LTD**, *n* - or a company, incorporated. It refers to the shareholders' limited liability. See **PLC**.

LINESMAN, *n* - a lineman.

LIP-SALVE, *n* - chap-stick.

LIVER SAUSAGE, *n* - liverwurst.

LOAF, *n (col)* - head, brains. *Use your loaf!*
RHYMING SLANG: loaf of bread.

LOCAL

LOCAL, *n* (*col*) - a pub close to one's residence or place of work and an Englishman's second home.

LOCAL AUTHORITY, *n* - local government.

LOCK, *n* - the extent to which a car's front wheels will turn to the right or left. *This car has a good lock.*

LOCKUP, *n* - a garage or storage place separate from the main premises.

LOCOMAN, *n* (*col*) - an engine-driver.

LOCUM OR LOCUM TENENS, *n* - a person who stands in temporarily for another member of the same profession, especially a doctor, chemist or clergyman. From Latin: *holding the place.*

LODGE, *n* - a small house at the entrance to the grounds of a country mansion.

LODGER, *n* - a roomer.

LOLLIPOP, *n* - a large piece of candy on a stick, for sucking slowly.

LOLLY, *n* (*col*) - 1. another name for LOLLIPOP or ICE LOLLY. 2. a slang word for money.

LOO, *n* (*col*) - a toilet. *In the middle of the night he awoke to find he had to go to the loo again.*

LORD, *n* - a title and way of addressing an earl, marquess, baron or viscount, or the younger sons of a duke or marquess.

LORD CHANCELLOR, *n* - in the British government, the cabinet minister who is head of the judiciary in England and Wales and Speaker of the House of Lords.

LORD'S, *n* - Britain's main cricket stadium, in London.

LORDSHIP, *n* - preceded by *Your* or *His*, a title used to address or refer to a bishop, a judge of the high court, or any peer except a duke.

LORRY, *n* - another word for truck. Colloquially, the phrase **FALL OFF THE BACK OF A LORRY** implies that something has been dishonestly acquired. *If he's selling DVDs at that price, you can be sure they fell off the back of a lorry.*

LOSSMAKER, *n* - an organization, industry or enterprise that consistently fails to make a profit.

LOUNGE OR LOUNGE BAR OR SALOON BAR, *n* - a slightly superior and more expensive bar

MAID OF HONOUR

in a pub or hotel, most pubs being divided into **PUBLIC BAR** and lounge.

LOUNGE SUIT, *n* - a business suit.

LOVE OR LUV OR LOVEY, *n* (*col*) - a friendly or affectionate way of addressing anyone of the opposite sex. *That'll be £6.50, love. Is this your first visit to England, love?*

LUCKY DIP, *n* - a grab bag.

LUD, *n* - lord. Used only in the phrase **M'LUD** (my lud) when addressing a judge in court.

LUDO, *n* - a simple board game played by children in which players advance counters by throwing dice.

LUG, *n* - ear. A Scottish word.

LUGGAGE VAN, *n* - the baggage car.

LUMBER, *n* - miscellaneous household articles that are stored away. As a verb, to clutter up with such articles. A **LUMBER ROOM** is a spare room where things are stored.

LUMBER WITH, *v* - to burden with something unpleasant, tedious, etc. *Women still tend to be lumbered with the cooking and cleaning. When reports have to be written, I'm always the one who gets lumbered.*

LUMP, THE, *n* - self-employed workers in the construction industry considered collectively, especially when referring to tax and national insurance evasion.

LUNCHEON VOUCHER or (*abbr*) **LV**, *n* - a voucher worth a certain amount issued to employees to be exchanged for food in restaurants. The British equivalent of a meal ticket.

M

MAC OR MACK OR MACKINTOSH, *n* - a raincoat.

MAGISTRATES COURT, *n* - a court held before two or more justices of the peace or a stipendiary magistrate and dealing with minor crimes and preliminary hearings (to decide whether there is a case to answer).

MAGPIE, *n* - a person who hoards small objects.

MAID OF HONOUR, *n* - a small tart with an al-

MAINS

MICKEY

mond-flavored filling.

MAINS, *n* - the pipes or wires which supply water, gas, and electricity to buildings. Used especially to refer to the place where these pipes and wires end inside the building. *First turn the water supply off at the mains. To save batteries, plug your laptop into the mains whenever possible.*

MAISONETTE, *n* - a self-contained duplex apartment, often part of a larger house and having its own outside entrance.

MAKE REDUNDANT, *v* - to deprive someone of his job because it is no longer necessary. A common and chilling expression. *They will be making 250 workers redundant at their processing plant next year.*

MANAGING DIRECTOR, *n* - the chief executive officer of a corporation.

MANCUNIAN, *n* - a person from Manchester.

MANOR, *n (col)* - a police district.

MANURE, *n* - any material, especially chemical fertilizer, used to fertilize land.

MARCHING ORDERS, *pl n (col)* - notice of dismissal from a job, walking papers.

MARG OR MARGE, *n (col)* - short for margarine.

MARGINAL, *adj* - relating to a constituency in which elections tend to be won by narrow margins. *The seats they are defending are marginal.*

MARK, *v* - in soccer, to stay close to an opponent in order to hamper his play.

MARK SOMEONE'S CARD, *v (col)* - to put someone in the picture, inform someone: *'There are one or two Old Bill in the bar,' he informed him. 'Thought I'd mark your card, Jack. Know what I mean'* (G.F. Newman).

MARKET GARDEN, *n* - an establishment where fruit and vegetables are grown for sale at a market. A truck farm.

MARMITE, *n* - a yeast and vegetable extract used as a spread, flavoring, etc. A trademark.

MARROW, *n* - marrow squash.

MASH, *n (col)* - mashed potatoes.

MASSES, *pl n (col)* - lots, great numbers or quantities. *The table was piled high with masses of food.*

MASTER, *n* - a male teacher. See HEADMASTER.

MATE, *n* - a friend, usually of the same sex.

The word is often used to address any other male. *We've been mates ever since we were at school. Tell you what, mate, I'll let you have it for a tenner.* The adjective **MATEY** means friendly or intimate, on good terms.

MATHS, *n* - math.

MATRON, *n* - the administrative head of the nursing staff in a hospital.

MAY OR MAY TREE, *n* - another name for hawthorn.

MAYFAIR, *n* - a smart, rich district in the center of London. On the British Monopoly board, the most expensive place to land.

MAYOR, *n* - the chairman of a municipal or borough council. Outside this restricted field, his functions are mainly ceremonial.

MEALS-ON-WHEELS, *n* - a welfare service, run by a social services department or voluntary organization, which delivers hot meals to senior citizens or other housebound people who might otherwise be unable to have them.

MEAN, *adj* - miserly, tight with money, petty. *As employers, they are notoriously mean.* A **MEANIE** or **MEANY** is a miserly or stingy person.

MECCANO, *n* - a brand of construction set, similar to an Erector set.

MEP, *n (abbr)* - Member of the European Parliament.

MEPACRINE, *n* - the drug quinacrine.

MERCER, *n* - a dealer in textile fabrics and fine cloth, especially silks.

MERCHANT BANK, *n* - an investment bank.

MERRY, *adj (col)* - slightly drunk.

MESS KIT, *n* - in the military, formal evening dress for officers.

METHYLATED SPIRITS, *n* - denatured alcohol. Often shortened to **METHS**.

METROPOLITAN POLICE, *n* - the London police.

MEWS, *n* - an alley or street lined by buildings originally used as stables but now converted into fashionable and expensive dwellings. Informally, an individual residence in such a street.

MICKEY, *n (col)* - self-assurance. To **TAKE THE MICKEY OUT OF SOMEONE** is to tease or make

MIDLANDS, THE

MUSO

fun of them. *It was nothing serious, I was just taking the mickey out of him.*

MIDLANDS, THE, *pl n* - the central counties of England, characterized by manufacturing industries.

MILD, *n* - draught beer, darker colored than bitter and flavored with fewer hops.

MILESTONE, *n* - a milepost.

MILK FLOAT, *n* - a small truck used to deliver milk to houses.

MILK ROUND, *n* - a route along which a milkman regularly delivers milk. By extension, a regular series of visits, especially those made by recruitment officers from industry to universities. The term may be used as a modifier: *milk-round recruitment*.

MILLEFEUILLE, *n* - a napoleon, i.e. a small cake of puff pastry filled with cream. From French: *thousand leaves*.

MINCEMEAT OR **MINCED MEAT** OR **MINCE**, *n* - hamburger meat.

MINCER, *n* - a meat grinder.

MIND OUT, *v* - to be careful or pay attention. *You'd better mind out the boss doesn't see you doing that.*

MINDER, *n (col)* - a bodyguard or an aide to someone in public life, especially a politician, keeping control of press and public relations.

MINERAL, *n* - a soft drink, soda.

MINGE, *n* - the female genitals or women collectively considered as sexual objects.

MINGY, *adj (col)* - meagre, niggardly. Probably a blend of mean and stingy.

MINICAB, *n* - a small saloon car used as a taxi. It responds to phone calls but is not licensed to cruise for fares.

MISCARRY, *v* - of freight, mail, etc., to fail to reach a destination.

MISERY, *n (col)* - a person who is habitually depressed. *He's such a misery.*

MISTER, *n* - the form of address for a surgeon.

MISTRESS, *n* - a female teacher. See **MASTER**.

MO, *n* - short for moment, especially in the phrase **HALF A MO**.

MOBILE, *n* - a cellular phone.

MOG OR **MOGGY**, *n (col)* - a cat.

MONKEY NUTS, *pl n* - peanuts in their shells.

MOPED, *n* - a motorbike, i.e. not over 50cc.

MOTHERING SUNDAY, *n* - another, less common name for Mother's Day, the fourth Sunday in Lent.

MOTION, *n* - 1. the evacuation of the bowels. 2. excrement. *I've been rather constipated lately, Doctor - slow motion and no motion, you know.*

MOTOR, *n* - a car. A **MOTORIST** is a driver, especially when considered as a car-owner. The **MOTORING CORRESPONDENT** of a newspaper covers developments in the automobile industry. A **MOTORWAY** is a superhighway.

MOUSETRAP, *n (col)* - cheese of poor quality.

MOUTH ORGAN, *n* - another name for a harmonica.

MP, *n (abbr)* - Member of Parliament, i.e. elected to the House of Commons.

MRS BEETON, *n* - a British cookery writer of the 19th century, still referred to as an authority today.

MRS MOP, *n (col)* - a cleaning lady.

MUCH OF A MUCHNESS, *n* - very similar. *In general appearance they were all much of a muchness.*

MUCK ABOUT, *v (col)* - to waste time, to mess about. To **MUCK UP** OR **TO MAKE A MUCK** OF something is to ruin or spoil it.

MUCK IN, *v (col)* - to share something, e.g. duties, work, etc. with other people, to pitch in together. *If we all muck in, we can get this finished in no time.*

MUCKER, *n (col)* - a friend.

MUDDLE THROUGH, *v* - to succeed in doing something in spite of lack of organization.

MUG, *n (col)* - someone who is easily swindled, a sucker. A **MUG'S GAME** is an activity where one is sure to lose money. *Betting on horses is a mug's game.*

MUGGINS, *n (col)* - 1. a foolish person who has been taken advantage of by others, a sucker. 2. a humorous way to refer to oneself. In both cases, it is normally used without an article.

MUM, *n (col)* - mom.

MUSIC-HALL, *n* - vaudeville.

MUSO, *n (col)* - a derogatory term for a pop musician who is overconcerned with tech-

NAAFI

nique rather than content or expression.

N

NAAFI, *n* (abbr) - Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes, an organization providing canteens, shops, etc., for British military personnel at home and overseas. A Naafi shop is similar to a PX store.

NAFF, *adj* (col) - inferior, in poor taste, socially unacceptable. Princess Anne used the verb **NAFF OFF**, in the imperative, to tell members of the press to beat it.

NANCY or **NANCY BOY**, *n* (col) - like US nance, a disparaging term for an effeminate man, especially a homosexual.

NAPPY, *n* - a diaper. Diaper rash is **NAPPY RASH**.

NARK, *n* (col) - 1. an informer or spy working for the police. 2. a person who complains irritatingly: *an old nark*. Used as a verb, it means to annoy, upset or irritate: *He was narked by her indifference*.

NASTY PIECE OF WORK, *n* (col) - a cruel, dangerous or miserly person.

NATIONAL GRID, *n* - a network of high-voltage power lines connecting major power stations.

NATIONAL INSURANCE, *n* - the compulsory state insurance scheme based on weekly contributions from employees and employers and providing payments to the unemployed, the sick, the retired, etc., as well as medical services.

NATTER, *v* - to talk idly, to chatter or gossip. Also used as a noun.

NAVY, *n* - an unskilled worker on a construction site, excavation or roadwork. In the 19th century navvies dug the navigational canals between the major industrial centers.

NEAR SIDE, *n* - the side of a car nearest the edge of the road, i.e. in Britain, the left side. Cf. **OFFSIDE**.

NEEDLE, *n* (col) - ill-will, a grudge, especially

NORMAN

in the expression **GET THE NEEDLE**: to feel dislike, distaste, nervousness or annoyance. *He got the needle after she had refused his invitation.*

NERVY, *adj* - not brash, bold or brazen, but tense, apprehensive, jumpy. *Harding was becoming nervy and irritable; having his sleep interrupted in the manner it had been did nothing to induce calm* (G.F. Newman).

NEVER-NEVER, *n* (col) - instalment plan. *He bought the car on the never-never*. See **HIRE PURCHASE**.

NEWSAGENT, *n* - a newsdealer. His shop not only sells newspapers and magazines, but also stationery, greetings cards, candy, etc.

NEWSREADER, *n* - a radio or television news announcer.

NICK, *v* (col) - 1. to steal. *I left it in the car and some bastard nicked it*. 2. to arrest. *They nicked them as they came out of the bank*. As a noun, the word means either a police station or the condition something is in. *It's had four previous owners, but it's still in fairly good nick*.

NICKER, *n* (col) - a pound sterling.

NIP, *v* (col) - to hurry, go quickly or for a short time. *I'll just nip out and post these letters*. *They nipped into the pub for a quick one*.

NIPPER, *n* (col) - a small boy.

NIPPY, *adj* (col) - quick, nimble. It can also be used to describe a car which is small and relatively powerful.

NISSAN HUT, *n* - British equivalent of a Quonset hut.

NO-GO AREA, *n* - a district in a town that is barricaded off, usually by a paramilitary organization, which the police, army, etc. can only enter by force.

NOB, *n* (col) - a person of wealth or social distinction. *The nobs were forever snubbing the snobs* (C.C. O'Brien).

NOBBLE, *v* (col) - 1. to disable a race-horse, especially with drugs. 2. to suborn a juror by threats or bribery.

NON-U, *adj* - not characteristic of or used by the upper class, especially regarding language.

NORMAN, *adj* - relating to the period in En-

gland following the conquest of 1066.

NOSY PARKER, *n* - a prying person, a busybody.

NOT HALF, *adv (col)* - see **HALF**.

NOTE, *n* - short for banknote. The word 'bill' is not used in this sense. *Have you got change for a ten-pound note?*

NOUGHTS AND CROSSES, *n* - tick-tack-toe, criss-cross.

NOUS, *n (col)* - good sense, intelligence, shrewdness. *Hillela had the nous to take up with the General when he was on the up-and-up again* (Nadine Gordimer). Pronounced *noose*.

NUMBER, *n (col)* - in the expression **ONE'S NUMBER IS UP**: one is finished, one is ruined or about to die.

NUMBER PLATE, *n* - the license plate on a car.

NUT, *n (col)* - in the expression **DO ONE'S NUT**: to be extremely angry, go into a rage.

NUTMEG, *v (col)* - in various sports, to kick or hit the ball between the legs of an opposing player.

NUTTER, *n* - a crazy person, a headcase.

O

O LEVEL, *n* - formerly, the basic level of the General Certificate of Education, now replaced by GCSE, an exam taken at age 16. *He has eight O-levels. He failed O-level maths.* The 'o' stood for ordinary, as opposed to advanced. See **A-LEVEL**.

O.N.O., *n (abbr)* - in advertisements the abbreviation of *or nearest offer*. Equivalent of **US o.b.o.**

OBE, *n (abbr)* - Officer of the Order of the British Empire.

OBSTACLE, *n* - a fence or hedge in showjumping.

ODDS, *pl n* - a significant difference, especially in the phrase **IT MAKES NO ODDS**.

ODDS AND SODS, *pl n (col)* - miscellaneous people or things.

OFF, *adj* - 1. of food and drink, having gone

bad, sour, etc. *This milk is off.* 2. in a restaurant, not being served at the moment. *Sorry, sir, haddock is off.*

OFF COLOUR, *adj* - slightly ill, unwell.

OFF-LICENCE, *n* - a package store, liquor store. Sales of alcoholic drink for consumption off the premises by a pub or an off-licence attached to a pub are called **OFF-SALES**.

OFF-THE-PEG, *adj* - off-the-rack, ready-made.

OFFSIDE, *n* - the side of a vehicle nearest the centre of the road, i.e. in Britain, the right side. The **OFFSIDE LANE** is the right-hand lane, the **OFFSIDE PASSENGER DOOR** is the one on the right. The opposite is **NEARSIDE**.

OK, *n (col)* - a person regarded as inferior because ignorant, ill-educated, or lower-class.

OLD BAILEY, *n* - the chief criminal court in London. Also the Central Criminal Court of England.

OLD BILL, *n (col)* - the police or any individual policeman.

OLD BOY, *n* - a male graduate of a school, an alumnus. Not necessarily of a British public school, despite the disapproving term **OLD BOY NETWORK**, meaning the appointment to power of former alumni of the same small group of public schools and universities. *He got on to the board through the old boy network.* An **OLD GIRL** is a female ex-student.

OLD LAG, *n (col)* - a long-term prisoner.

OLD SCHOOL TIE, *n* - a distinctive tie that indicates which school the wearer attended.

OLD SWEAT, *n (col)* - an old soldier, a veteran, or, generally, a person who has a great deal of experience in some activity.

OM, *n (abbr)* - Order of Merit, an order conferred on civilians and servicemen for eminence in any field.

ONE-OFF, *n* - something that is carried out or made only once. As a modifier: *a one-off job. The group is set to play a one-off show with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.*

ONIONS, *pl n (col)* - in the expression **KNOW ONE'S ONIONS**: to be fully acquainted with a subject.

OPEN UNIVERSITY, *n* - a university founded in 1969 for mature students studying by cor-

OPENCAST MINING

PASSENGER

respondence courses, aided by television and radio lectures, local counselling and summer schools.

OPENCAST MINING, *n* - strip mining.

OPENING TIME, *n* - the time at which pubs can legally start selling drinks.

OPERATING THEATRE, *n* - the operating room in a hospital.

OPTIC, *n* - a device attached to an inverted bottle for dispensing measured quantities of liquid, e.g. whiskey, gin, etc.

ORDINARY SHARES, *pl n* - common stock.

ORDNANCE SURVEY, *n* - the official map-making body of the British or Irish government.

ORPINE OR ORPIN, *n* - the plant live-forever.

OTHER RANKS, *pl n* - all those who do not hold a commissioned rank in the armed forces.

OUTFITTER OR MEN'S OUTFITTER, *n* - a shop that sells men's clothes, a haberdasher.

OVEN GLOVES, *pl n* - pot holders.

OVERALL, *n* - a loose-fitting protective outer garment, a smock.

OVERSPILL, *n* - the movement of people from overcrowded cities to less populated areas.

OVERTAKE, *n* - to pass another vehicle.

OWNER-OCCUPIER, *n* - a person who owns or is in the process of buying the house or apartment he or she lives in.

OXBRIDGE, *n* - Oxford and Cambridge universities regarded as the seat of traditional academic and social excellence, privilege and exclusiveness. Used as a modifier: *He spoke with an Oxbridge accent. Oxbridge graduates have long dominated the diplomatic service.*

OXONIAN, *adj* - relating to Oxford or Oxford University. As a noun, it means someone who comes from Oxford or who is a member of the university.

P

P & P, *n (abbr)* - postage and packing.

PA, *n (abbr)* personal assistant.

PACK, *n* - another word for a deck of cards.

PACK IN, *v (col)* - to stop doing something, especially in the phrase **PACK IT IN**. *I'm getting too old for this kind of work. Soon I'm going to have to pack it in.*

PACK UP, *v* - to break down, stop working. *The engine packed up just before we reached Dover.*

PACKED LUNCH, *n* - a sack lunch.

PAKI, *n (col)* - a derogatory term for a Pakistani or person of Pakistani descent, or, loosely, for a person from any part of the Indian subcontinent. The racist practice of making unprovoked physical assaults on such people is called **PAKI-BASHING**. Pronounced *pack-ee*.

PANDA CAR, *n* - a police cruiser. So called because its blue-and-white markings resemble the black-and white markings of the giant panda.

PANNIKIN, *n* - a small metal cup or pan.

PANTECHNICON, *n (old)* - a furniture removal truck.

PANTO, *n (col)* - short for pantomime. See next entry.

PANTOMIME, *n* - a kind of play performed at Christmas, characterized by farce, music, lavish sets, stock roles, and topical jokes. Or, generally, any confused or farcical situation.

PANTS, *pl n* - underpants. US pants = GB trousers.

PARAFFIN OR PARAFFIN OIL, *n* - kerosene.

PARALYTIC, *adj (col)* - blind drunk.

PARCEL, *n* - another word for a package.

PARKY, *adj (col)* - of the weather, chilly, cold.

PART EXCHANGE, *n* - a transaction in which used goods are taken as partial payment for more expensive ones of the same type. A trade-in.

PARTERRE, *n* - the pit in a theater.

PASS OUT, *v* - to qualify for a military commission. *General Anderson passed out from Sandhurst in 1957.*

PASSENGER, *n (col)* - a member of a group or team who is a burden on the others because of not participating fully in the work. *I expect everybody to pull his weight, be-*

PASTY

cause there's no place for passengers on this project.

PASTY, *n* - a pie or turnover, especially one filled with seasoned meat or fish.

PATHETIC, *adj (col)* - ludicrous, beneath contempt, worthless. *The standard of goalkeeping in amateur football today is pathetic.*

PATIENCE, *n* - the card game solitaire.

PATROLMAN, *n* - a man employed to patrol an area to help drivers in difficulty.

PAVEMENT, *n* - the sidewalk.

PAVILION, *n* - a building at a sports ground, especially a cricket pitch, in which players change.

PAWKY, *adj* - shrewd and cunning, often in a humorous way.

PAYE, *n (abbr)* - Pay As You Earn, a system whereby tax is deducted from wages at source.

PEASOUPER, *n (col)* - a dense, dirty yellowish fog.

PEBBLE DASH, *n* - a rough finish for external walls consisting of small stones embedded in plaster.

PECKER, *n (col)* - courage, pluck, spirits, especially in the expression **KEEP ONE'S PECKER UP**. *Keep your pecker up, mate, we haven't lost this match yet.*

PECKISH, *adj (col)* - feeling slightly hungry.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING, *n* - a crosswalk. Also called a **ZEBRA CROSSING**.

PEER, *n* - a member of the nobility, a nobleman. A life peer, e.g. Margaret Thatcher, is one who has been given the title of baron or baroness and an accompanying seat in the House of Lords, and whose title lapses at death.

PERIPATETIC, *adj* - employed in two or more educational establishments and travelling from one to another. *A peripatetic football coach.*

PERK, *n (col)* - short for perquisite.

PERSISTENT CRUELTY, *n* - in British law, conduct causing fear of danger to the life or health of a spouse. The term is used in matrimonial proceedings before magistrates.

PERSPEX, *n* - similar to plexiglass. Both words

PLACE

are trademarks but are often written in lower case. *The receptionist regrets the construction of a perspex divider at her counter.*

PETITIONER, *n* - the plaintiff in a divorce suit.

PETROL, *n* - gasoline. A **PETROL STATION** is a filling station.

PETTY SESSIONS, *n* - another name for a magistrates' court.

PEW, *n (col)* - a seat, especially in the phrase **TAKE A PEW**.

PIAZZA, *n* - a covered passageway or gallery.

PICTURES, THE, *n* - a movie theater or film show.

When we were kids, we used to go to the pictures every Saturday afternoon.

PIGEON, *n (col)* - concern or responsibility, as in *It's his pigeon now, let him worry about it.*

PIGSTY, *n* - a pigpen. Figuratively, a dirty or untidy place. *When was the last time you cleaned out your room? It's a pigsty!*

PILLAR BOX, *n* - a red pillar-shaped box for mailing letters.

PILLOCK, *n (col)* - a stupid or annoying person.

PINK, *adj (col)* - left-wing.

PINK GIN, *n* - gin and bitters.

PINT, *n* - 1 UK pint = 0.568 litre, 1 US pint = 0.473 litre. Informally, a pint always refers to a pint of beer, as in *He's gone out for a pint.*

PISSED, *adj (col)* - not angry, but drunk. To go **ON THE PISS** means to go on a drinking binge.

A **PISS-UP** is a drinking session. A **PISSHEAD** is a drunkard, a bullshit artist, or, very often, both. A **PISS ARTIST** is a boastful or incompetent person, or one who drinks heavily. To **TAKE THE PISS** means to tease or to make fun of someone. To **PISS OFF**, used only in the imperative, means to go away.

PIT, *n (col)* - bed. *It's nearly noon and the lazy bugger's still in his pit.*

PITCH, *n* - 1. in many sports, e.g. soccer and cricket, the field of play. 2. a vendor's station, especially on a sidewalk. Colloquially, to **QUEER SOMEONE'S PITCH** is to upset their plans or opportunities.

PLACE, *n* - in horse racing, the first, second

PLACEMAN

PRIMARY SCHOOL

or third position at the finish.

PLACEMAN, *n* - a derogatory term for a person who holds a public office as a reward for political support and for private profit.

PLASTER, *n* - SEE STICKING PLASTER.

PLATELAYER, *n* - a trackman.

PLATFORM, *n* - a raised area in a railroad station, from which passengers have access to the trains. *The 9:30 to Manchester is now departing from platform 8.*

PLAY UP, *v* (*col*) - 1. to function erratically, e.g. a machine. *The bloody photocopier is playing up again.* 2. to hurt or cause one pain. *My back's playing me up something fierce.*

PLC or **PLC**, *n* (*abbr*) - public limited company, a synonym for LTD (limited) after the name of a corporation. Equivalent to Inc.

PLEB, *n* (*col*) - a common vulgar person. Short for plebeian. The adjective is **PLEBBY**. *It was a plebby sort of party.*

PLIMSOLLS, *pl n* - rubber-soled cloth shoes, sneakers. Also called **GYM SHOES**.

PLONK, *n* (*col*) - cheap wine, usually of inferior quality. The word probably derives from French *blanc*, white, in *vin blanc*.

PLUMMY, *adj* (*col*) - of speech, having a deep tone and a refined and somewhat drawling articulation.

PM, *n* (*abbr*) - the Prime Minister.

PO, *n* (*col, old*) - short for chamber pot.

POCKET MONEY, *n* - a small weekly sum of money given to children by parents as an allowance.

POET LAUREATE, *n* - the poet appointed as court poet of Britain, a lifetime post. The first was Ben Jonson in 1616.

POINTS SYSTEM, *n* - a system used to assess applicants' eligibility for local authority housing, based on points awarded for such factors as the length of time the applicant has lived in the area, how many children are in the family, etc.

POLE, *n* (*col*) - in the expression **UP THE POLE**: slightly mad or completely mistaken, on the wrong track.

POLYTECHNIC, *n* - an institute of higher education offering courses, especially vocational courses, at degree standard and below.

PONCE, *n* (*col*) - another word for a pimp. To **PONCE ABOUT** is to do something slowly, incorrectly or unseriously.

PONG, *n* (*col*) - an offensive smell, a stench. *He removed his shoes and instantly a powerful pong filled the room.* Also used as a verb. *The bazaars ponged of filthy oriental spices. Pooh! it pongs!*

PONTOON, *n* - another name for twenty-one, i.e. the cardgame blackjack.

PONY, *n* (*col*) - a sum of £25.

POOF, *n* (*col*) - derogatory slang for a male homosexual.

POOLS or **FOOTBALL POOLS**, *pl n* - an organized nationwide postal gambling pool betting on the result of soccer matches.

POORLY, *adj* (*col*) - ill, unwell.

POPOVER, *n* - an individual Yorkshire pudding, often served with roast beef.

PORTER, *n* - a person in charge of a gate or door, a doorman.

POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION, *n* - affirmative action (to counter discrimination against minority groups in employment and education).

POST, *v* - to transfer to a different unit or ship, e.g. on taking up a new appointment.

POSTAL CODE or **POSTCODE**, *n* - zip code.

POTHOLING, *n* - a sport dedicated to the exploration of underground caves. Practised by a **POTHLER**.

POTTER ABOUT, *v* - to busy oneself in a desultory though agreeable way. *I've been pottering about in the garden all morning.* To **POTTER AWAY** a period of time means to waste it. *I intended to do all kinds of things during the holidays, but in the end I just pottered them away as usual.*

POTTY, *adj* (*col*) - slightly crazy, eccentric.

PRAM, *n* - a baby carriage.

PRAT, *n* (*col*) - an incompetent or ineffectual person. Often used as a term of abuse.

PREFECT, *n* - a schoolchild appointed to a position of limited power over other students.

PREFERENCE SHARES, *pl n* - preferred stock.

PREZZIE, *n* (*col*) - a present, gift.

PRIMARY SCHOOL, *n* - grade school, for children below the age of 11. It is usually divided into **INFANT SCHOOL**, for children aged be-

tween 5 and 7, and JUNIOR SCHOOL, for those aged between 7 and 11.

PRIVATE PATIENT, *n* - a patient receiving medical treatment not paid for by the National Health Service. Similarly, a **PRIVATE PRACTICE** is a medical practice that is not part of the NHS.

PRIVY PURSE, *n* - the money voted by Parliament for the personal expenses of the monarch.

PRODUCER, *n* - the director of a play. Similarly, **PRODUCTION** refers to artistic direction, not finance.

PROLE, *adj (col)* - short for proletarian.

PROMENADE, *n* - a public walk, especially at a seaside resort.

PROVINCES, *THE, pl n* - all of Britain outside London.

PROVOST, *n* - a military policeman. Informally, a **REDCAP**. Cf. US provost marshal.

PSEUD, *n (col)* - a person who is false, unauthentic, especially because of unwarranted intellectual pretensions.

PUB-CRAWL, *n (col)* - a bar-hopping tour.

PUBLIC BAR, *n* - a bar in a pub serving drinks at a slightly cheaper price than in the saloon bar or LOUNGE.

PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT or (*abbr*) **PLR**, *n* - a scheme whereby authors receive payment when their books are borrowed from public libraries.

PUBLIC SCHOOL, *n* - a private school.

PULL, *v (col)* - to attract and pick up members of the opposite sex. *A good-looking lad like Jim has no trouble pulling the birds.*

PULL-IN, *n* - a roadside cafeteria, especially for truck drivers.

PUNCH-UP, *n (col)* - a fight or brawl.

PUNTER, *n* - a person who gambles, a prostitute's trick, or the victim of a grifter. *The favourites, as any punter will tell you, don't always win.* Also, any member of the public, especially when a customer. *The punters flock into the sales.*

PUP, *n (col)* - a conceited young man, especially in the phrase **YOUNG PUP**.

PURPLE HEART, *n (col)* - a heart-shaped purple tablet consisting mainly of amphetamine.

PURSE, *n* - a change purse. US purse = GB handbag.

PUSH-BIKE, *n (col)* - a bicycle.

PUSHCHAIR, *n* - a stroller.

PUT PAID TO, *v* - to end or destroy. *This latest injury puts paid to his hopes of participating in the forthcoming Olympics.*

PUT THROUGH, *n* - on the telephone, to connect.

Q

QUACK, *n (col)* - a doctor.

QUARTERLIGHT, *n* - a small pivoted window in the door of a car for ventilation.

QUEEN'S COUNSEL or (*abbr*) **QC**, *n* - see **BARRISTER**.

QUEER FISH, *n (col)* - an odd or eccentric person.

QUEER-BASHING, *n* - the practice of making unprovoked physical assaults on homosexuals or supposed homosexuals. Cf. **PAKIBASHING**.

QUEUE, *n* - a line of people waiting for something. *There was a long queue in front of the cinema.* Also used as a verb: to stand in line. *We had to queue for hours.*

QUICK ONE, *n (col)* - a speedily consumed alcoholic drink.

QUID, *n (col)* - one pound sterling. To **BE QUIDS IN** is to be in a very favorable or advantageous position.

QUIETEN DOWN, *v* - to make or become calm, silent.

QUIFF, *n* - a prominent tuft of hair, especially one brushed up above the forehead.

QUIN, *n* - a quint (quintuplet).

QUINTILLION, *n* - a nonillion, i.e. one followed by 30 zeros.

QUIZ MASTER, *n* - the chairman of a quiz or panel game.

R

RABBIT ON, *v (col)* - to talk inconsequentially, to chatter.

RACECOURSE, *n* - a racetrack.

RADA, *n (abbr)* - the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Britain's leading drama school.

RAG, *v* - to tease, taunt or play rough practical jokes on. As a noun, it means a practical joke, especially on a fellow student, or a prank. During a university **RAG WEEK**, various events are organized to raise money for charity, including processions of decorated floats, the sale of special magazines, etc.

RAG-AND-BONE MAN OR RAGMAN, *n* - a junkman.

RAILCARD, *n* - an I.D. card that young people or pensioners can buy, permitting them to buy train tickets more cheaply.

RAILWAY, *n* - a railroad. A **RAILWAYMAN** is a railroad worker.

RAMP, *n (col)* - a swindle, especially one involving orbitant prices.

RANDY, *adj (col)* - sexually eager or excited, horny. *The heat made them both randy.*

RANK, *n* - a taxi stand.

RATES, *pl n* - formerly a tax levied on property by a local authority. Now replaced by the community charge.

RATTY, *adj (col)* - irritable, annoyed, testy.

RAVER, *n (col)* - a person who leads a wild or uninhibited social life, a party animal. The verb is to rave, to enjoy oneself wildly. A

RAVE OR RAVE-UP is a raucous party.

RE-SIT, *n* - to take an examination for the second time. Also used as a noun. *He'll have another chance at the re-sits in September.*

READER, *n* - similar to an assistant professor.

READIES, *pl n (col)* - money.

RECEIVE, *v* - to buy and sell stolen goods. A **RECEIVER** is a fence.

RECEPTION, *n* - the front desk in a hotel.

REDCAP, *n (col)* - not an airport porter but a military policeman

REGISTER OFFICE OR REGISTRY OFFICE, *n* - a government office where civil marriages are

performed and births, marriages, and deaths are recorded.

REGISTRAR, *n* - a senior doctor in a hospital, ranking just below a **CONSULTANT**.

REGISTRATION DOCUMENT, *n* - a document giving identification details of a vehicle, e.g. date of registration, engine and chassis numbers, owner's name, etc.

RELEGATE, *v* - to demote a soccer team to a lower division.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY, *n* - Veterans' Day.

RESERVED LIST, *n* - a list of retired officers from the armed services who are available for recall to active service in an emergency.

RESERVED OCCUPATION, *n* - in time of war, a job from which one will not be drafted into military service.

RESIDENT, *n* - a junior doctor who lives in the hospital where he works.

RETURN, *n* - a round-trip ticket. When you ask for a ticket to your destination, you will probably hear the question: *Single or return?* See **SINGLE**.

RHYMING SLANG, *n* - slang in which a word is replaced by a phrase or the first part of a phrase which rhymes with it. Cockney rhyming slang has given modern colloquial English many common terms. See **BUTCHER'S**, **LOAF**, **BRISTOLS**, **CHINA**, **TEA LEAF**.

RIDER, *n* - a statement made by a jury in addition to its verdict, such as a recommendation for mercy.

RIGHT AS RAIN, *adj (col)* - perfectly fit, perfectly all right.

RIGHTO OR RIGHT OH, *sent sub (col)* - an expression of agreement or compliance.

RING UP, *v* - to call someone on the telephone. To **GIVE SOMEONE A RING** has the same meaning. *She keeps ringing me up in the middle of the night. I'll give you a ring when I get back. To RING OFF* is to hang up the phone. *I'll have to ring off now, but I'll call you later.*

RINGROAD, *n* - a belt, beltway.

RISE, *n* - a salary raise.

ROCK CAKE, *n* - a small cake with a rough hard surface and containing currants.

ROCKET, *n (col, old)* - a severe reprimand, especially in the phrase **GET A ROCKET**.

ROLL-UP

- ROLL-UP**, *n (col)* - a hand-rolled cigarette.
- ROPE IN**, *v* - to persuade someone to take part in some activity, with no connotation of trickery.
- ROPY**, *adj (col)* - inferior or inadequate.
- ROTA**, *n* - 1. a roll call or roster of names. 2. a rotation of duties.
- ROUGH ON**, *adj (col)* - severe towards someone, or unfortunate for someone.
- ROUNABOUT**, *n* - 1. a traffic circle. 2. another word for a merry-go-round.
- ROUNDERS**, *n* - a ball game in which players run between posts after hitting the ball, scoring a rounder if they round all four before the ball is retrieved. Clearly, not unrelated to baseball.
- ROWING BOAT**, *n* - a rowboat.
- RUBBER**, *n* - 1. an eraser. 2. *(col)* - a condom.
- RUCKSACK**, *n* - a backpack.
- RUG**, *n* - a piece of thick, warm fabric or fur used as a coverlet or lap robe for travelers.
- RUGGER**, *n (col)* - rugby.
- RUM**, *adj (col)* - strange, peculiar, odd.
- RUMBLE OR TUMBLE**, *v (col)* - to find out about something or someone. *The police rumbled their plans.*
- RUN-UP**, *n* - the period immediately preceding something. *Our sales always increase dramatically in the run-up to Christmas.* The term derives from cricket, where the bowler takes a run before pitching the ball.
- RUNNER BEANS**, *pl n* - French beans.

S

- SAFE AS HOUSES**, *adj (col)* - very secure.
- SALE OF WORK**, *n* - a sale of goods and handicrafts made by the members of a club, church congregation, etc. to raise money, usually for a worthy cause.
- SALOON**, *n* - a sedan automobile.
- SANDHURST**, *n* - home of the Royal Military Academy, equivalent to West Point.
- SARKY**, *adj (col)* - sarcastic.

SERVICE FLATS

- SARNIE**, *n (col)* - a sandwich.
- SAUSAGE ROLL**, *n* - a roll of sausage meat in pastry.
- SCARPER**, *v (col)* - to depart in haste. *When he heard the law at the door, he did what all his instincts told him to do: he scarpered.* From Italian *scappare*, to escape.
- SCATTY**, *adj (col)* - empty-headed, frivolous, thoughtless. It derives from scatterbrained.
- SCENT**, *n* - another word for perfume.
- SCHOONER**, *n* - a large glass, not for beer but for sherry.
- SCOFF**, *n* - to eat food quickly and greedily, to devour.
- SCOTCH EGG**, *n* - a hard-boiled egg wrapped in sausage meat, coated with bread crumbs, and deep-fried. Standard pub grub.
- SCOUSE**, *n (col)* - a person from Liverpool or the dialect spoken there.
- SCRIBBLING PAD**, *n* - a scratchpad.
- SCRUBBER**, *n (col)* - derogatory slang for a promiscuous girl.
- SCULLERY**, *n* - a small room or part of a kitchen where dishes are washed, vegetables prepared, etc.
- SCUPPER**, *v* - to sink one's own ship deliberately.
- SEASON TICKET**, *n* - a commuter ticket.
- SECATEURS**, *pl n* - a small pair of shears for pruning.
- SECOND STRING TO ONE'S BOW**, *n* - an alternative course of action to be used if the first one fails.
- SEE SOMEONE RIGHT**, *v (col)* - to ensure that someone is treated fairly.
- SELLOTAPE**, *n* - scotch tape. Both names are trademarks which have become generic.
- SEMI-DETACHED OR SEMI**, *adj & n* - see DETACHED.
- SEMI-SKIMMED MILK**, *n* - low-fat milk.
- SEMOLINA**, *n* - cream of wheat.
- SEND DOWN**, *v* - 1. to expel from a university. 2. to send to prison.
- SEND UP**, *v (col)* - to make fun of or parody. The noun is **SEND-UP**. *It's a satirical programme, they do send-ups of all the major political figures.*
- SERVICE FLATS**, *pl n* - an apartment hotel.

SERVIETTE

SMARMY

SERVIETTE, *n* - a napkin.

SHADOW, *adj* - relating to members of the main opposition party in Parliament who would hold ministerial office if their party were in power: shadow cabinet, shadow Chancellor.

SHAG, *v (col)* - to have sex with someone, or, as a noun, an act of sexual intercourse.

SHAMBOLIC, *adj (col)* - completely disorganized, chaotic. *The country's transportation system is in a shambolic state.* An alteration of shambles.

SHEEPWALK, *n* - a tract of land for grazing sheep.

SHEPHERD'S PIE, *n* - a meat pie baked in a crust of mashed potatoes.

SHIN, *n* - a cut of beef: the lower foreleg.

SHIRTY, *adj (col)* - bad-tempered or annoyed.

SHOELACE, *n* - a shoestring.

SHOP, *n* - a store.

SHOP, *v (col)* - to inform on or to betray to the police.

SHOP ASSISTANT, *n* - a salesclerk.

SHOPWALKER, *n* - a floorwalker in a department store.

SHORT, *n* - a drink of spirits as opposed to a long drink such as beer.

SHORT LIST, *n* - a list of suitable applicants for a job, from which the successful candidate will be selected. The verb is to **SHORT-LIST**.

SHORTHAND TYPIST, *n* - a stenographer.

SHORTS, *pl n* - short pants.

SHOUT, *n (col)* - a round of drinks or one's turn to buy a round of drinks. *All right, come on, whose shout is it?*

SIDEBOARDS, *pl n* - another name for sideburns.

SILENCER, *n* - the muffler on a car.

SINGLE, *n* - a one-way ticket. *How much is a single to London, please?* See **RETURN TICKET**.

SINGLET, *n* - either an undershirt or the garment worn with shorts by athletes, boxers, etc.

SINGSONG, *n* - an informal session of singing, e.g. by customers in a pub, especially of popular or traditional songs.

SINK, *v (col)* - to drink. *It was nothing unusual for him to sink three or four pints of*

Guinness at lunchtime.

SIT, *v* - to be a candidate. *He's sitting his final exams in June.*

SIT OUT, *v* - in sailing, to hike out.

SITTING ROOM, *n* - another name for the living room.

SKIMMED MILK, *n* - nonfat milk.

SKINT, *adj (col)* - broke, without money.

SKIPPING ROPE, *n* - a jump rope.

SKIRTING BOARD, *n* - baseboard.

SKIVE, *v* - to evade work or shirk responsibility. A person who persistently does so is a **SKIVER**.

SKIVVY, *n* - an often contemptuous term for a female servant who does various menial jobs. As a verb, it means to do such work.

SLAB, *n (col)* - an operating or mortuary table.

SLAG, *n (col)* - a coarse girl or woman of ill-repute. Used as a verb, the word means to bad-mouth or trash verbally.

SLAP AND TICKLE, *n (col)* - sexual play, especially in the phrase **A BIT OF SLAP AND TICKLE**.

SLAP-BANG, *adv (col)* - slam-bang.

SLAP-UP, *adj (col)* - of meals, lavish, excellent.

SLASH, *n (col)* - the act of urinating. To **GO FOR A SLASH** is to go for a leak.

SLATE, *n (col)* - in the expression **ON THE SLATE**: on credit.

SLEEP IN, *v* - to sleep longer than usual.

SLEEPER, *n* - a railroad crosstie.

SLEEPING PARTNER, *n* - in business, a silent partner.

SLEEPING POLICEMAN, *n* - a bump built across roads, especially in housing estates, to deter drivers from speeding.

SLIMY, *adj (col)* - obsequious, servile.

SLOSHED, *adj (col)* - drunk.

SLOWCOACH, *n (col)* - a slowpoke.

SMACK IN THE EYE, *n (col)* - a snub or setback.

SMALL BEER, *n (col)* - people or things of no importance.

SMALLS, *pl n (col)* - items of personal laundry, especially underwear.

SMARMY, *adj (col)* - obsequiously flattering or unpleasantly suave. *My boss was a smarmy ex-salesman of the worst kind.* To **SMARM UP** to someone is to ingratiate oneself.

SMASHER

SMASHER, *n (col)* - a person or thing that is very attractive.

SMASHING, *adj (col)* - excellent, first-rate, wonderful. *This is a smashing book and I recommend it wholeheartedly.*

SMOOCH, *v* - to dance very slowly and amorously with one's arms around one's partner.

SNAP, *n* - a children's card game in which the word 'snap' is called when two cards of the same kind are turned up. In everyday speech, a cry of 'snap' usually means 'me too', e.g. when two friends discover they both have to see the dentist, or that they are both reading the same book.

SNATCH, *n (col)* - a robbery. *A diamond snatch.*

SNATCH SQUAD, *n* - a squad of soldiers or police trained to pick out and arrest the ring-leaders of civil demonstrations.

SNEAK, *v (col)* - to tell tales, especially in school.

SNIP, *n (col)* - a bargain.

SNOG, *v* - to kiss and cuddle, to neck. Also used as a noun.

SNOOK, *n* - in the expression **COCK A SNOOK**: to thumb one's nose. *The clock is set wrong and hung crooked, as if to cock a snook at the importance of time* (K. Crossley-Holland).

SNOOKER, *n* - pocket billiards, played with 15 red balls and 6 balls of other colors. Colloquially, the verb snooker means to lead someone into a situation in which all possible choices are undesirable, to trap. Cf. the US expression *behind the eight ball*.

SNOUT, *n (col)* - 1. tobacco, especially now for hand-rolled cigarettes. 2. a police informer. 3. a person's nose.

SNUG, *n* - a very small private room in a pub.

SOCK, *n (col)* - in the expression **PUT A SOCK IN IT**: to be quiet, shut up.

SOCKET, *n* - an electrical outlet.

SOD, *n (col)* - 1. an obnoxious person. 2. a fellow, a guy. *Poor sod, he almost got lucky for once* (Jack Higgins). The verb **SOD OFF** means to go away, to depart. The word is shortened from *sodomite*.

SOFT FURNISHINGS, *pl n* - curtains, hangings,

rugs, etc.

SOHO, *n* - a small district of central London, known for its strip clubs, sex-shops, restaurants and pubs.

SOLICITOR, *n* - a lawyer who advises clients on matters of law, draws up legal documents, and prepares cases for **BARRISTERS**, i.e. who handles most of the out-of-court work.

SONG AND DANCE, *n (col)* - an unnecessary fuss. *Her father made a great song and dance of her coming home after midnight.*

SOPPY, *adj (col)* - excessively sentimental, mawkish. *A painting of a fluffy little kitten with big staring eyes will always sell, if it's soppy enough.*

SORBET, *n* - sherbet. Pronounced *sorr-bay*.

SORT OUT, *v* - 1. to solve something. 2. *(col)* - to beat someone up.

SPANNER, *n* - a monkey wrench. Colloquially, to **THROW A SPANNER IN THE WORKS** is to impede or hinder something.

SPARE, *adj (col)* - very angry or upset, especially in the phrase **GO SPARE**. *Why didn't you call to let us know where you were? Your mum's been going spare with worry.*

SPARE TYRE, *n (col)* - a jocular term for a deposit of fat just above the waist.

SPEAKING CLOCK, *n* - a telephone service which states the correct time precisely.

SPECIAL BRANCH, *n* - the branch of Scotland Yard dealing with political crimes and terrorism.

SPEECH DAY, *n* - in schools, a day each year on which prizes are presented and speeches made

SPEND A PENNY, *v (col, old)* - to go to the toilet.

SPIDERMAN, *n (col)* - a person who erects the steel structure of a building.

SPIKE, *n (col)* - a flophouse. Also called a **DOSSHOUSE**.

SPINNEY, *n* - a small wood or copse.

SPIT IT OUT!, *v (col)* - a command given to someone that he should speak immediately.

SPIV, *n (col)* - a person who makes a living by petty grifting. The adjective **SPIVVY** connotes a sharp, flashy way of dressing.

SPIV

SPLASH OUT

STREAM

SPLASH OUT, *v (col)* - see LASH OUT.

SPOD, *n (col)* - an Internet addict.

SPOKE, *n* - in the expression **PUT A SPOKE IN SOMEONE'S WHEEL**: to thwart someone's plans.

SPONGE BAG, *n* - a waterproof bag for toilet articles.

SPONGE PUDDING, *n* - a light steamed or baked pudding, spongy in texture, made with various flavorings or fruit.

SPOT-ON, *adj (col)* - absolutely correct, very accurate. Cf. **BANG-ON**, **DEAD-ON**.

SPOTTED DICK, *n* - a steamed or boiled suet pudding containing dried fruit.

SPOUT, *n* - in the expression **UP THE SPOUT**: 1. pregnant. 2. completely wrong. *These figures are completely up the spout.* 3. completely wasted. *That's another £50 up the spout.* 4. in great difficulty. *Now you're really up the spout.*

SPRING ONION, *n* - a scallion.

SPUD BASHING, *n (col)* - in the military, the task of peeling potatoes, given as a punishment. Other activities are similarly named, e.g. **SQUARE-BASHING**: drill on a barrack square.

SPUNK, *n (col)* - semen.

SQUIRE, *n (col)* - an ironic term of address used by one man to another. *Now, squire, what can I do for you?*

STAFF, *n* - in surveying, a rod. A **STAFFMAN** holds the levelling staff when a survey is being made.

STAFF SERGEANT, *n* - a noncommissioned officer with a rank between sergeant and warrant officer, employed on administrative duties.

STAGE, *n* - a division of a bus route for which there is a fixed fare.

STAND, *n* - to be a candidate for office. US politicians run. *He has announced his intention to stand for Parliament at the next elections.*

STANDARD LAMP, *n* - a floor lamp.

STARKERS, *adj (col)* - stark naked.

STARTER, *n* - the first course of a meal.

STARTING STALLS, *n* - a line of stalls in which horses are enclosed at the start of a race.

STATE SCHOOL, *n* - a public school.

STATELY HOME, *n* - a large mansion, especially one open to the public.

STATEROOM, *n* - a large room in a palace or other building for use on state occasions.

STD, *n (abbr)* - subscriber trunk dialling. The UK equivalent of direct distance dialing.

STEEP, *n* - of a statement, extreme or far-fetched.

STEWED, *adj* - 1. a word used to describe tea that has been left to infuse for too long and so has a bitter taste. 2. *(col)* - a slang word for drunk.

STICK, *n (col)* - abuse. *The wife's been giving him a lot of stick about spending so much time down in the pub.*

STICKING PLASTER OR PLASTER, *n* - a band-aid, adhesive tape.

STILETTO OR STILETTO HEEL, *n* - a spike heel on a woman's shoe.

STOCKBROKER BELT, *n (col)* - the area outside a city, especially London, in which rich commuters live.

STOCKING FILLER, *n* - a small present, especially one suitable for inclusion in a Christmas stocking.

STONE, *n* - 1. the pit of certain fruits, e.g. a peach or cherry. 2. a unit of weight, used especially to express human body weight, equal to 14 pounds or 6.350 kilograms.

STONE THE CROWS, *interj (col)* - an expression of surprise, dismay, etc. *'Well, stone the crows,' she shouted. 'Corporal Pine. After all these years. What on earth have you done to your hand?'* (John le Carré)

STONY-BROKE, *adj (col)* - stone-broke, flat-broke.

STOP PRESS, *n* - news items inserted into a newspaper after the printing has been started.

STORM CONE, *n* - a canvas cone hoisted as a warning of high winds.

STORM IN A TEACUP, *n* - a tempest in a teapot.

STRAIGHT, *n* - the straightaway of a racetrack.

STRAIGHT UP, *sent sub (col)* - honestly, truly, exactly. *Straight up, guv, those were his very words.*

STRAIGHTFORWARD, *adj* - of a task, simple, easy.

STREAM, *v* - to divide students into streams

STRETCH

SWISH

according to their ability.

STRETCH, *n* - in the expression **AT A STRETCH**: if really necessary or in extreme circumstances.

STROPPY, *adj (col)* - angry, awkward, looking for trouble.

STUFF, *v (col)* - to have sex with a woman, to screw. **A BIT OF STUFF** is a girl or woman considered sexually. **GET STUFFED!** is an exclamation of contemptuous anger or annoyance against another person, synonymous with **GET KNOTTED!**

SUB, *v (col)* - to grant an advance on wages, or to lend someone money until payday.

SUBALTERN, *n* - a commissioned officer just below the rank of captain in the British army.

SUBEDITOR, *n* - a person who checks and edits its copy on a newspaper.

SUBSCRIPTION, *n* - the membership dues paid to a society or club.

SUBTOPIA, *n* - suburban development that encroaches on rural areas, offering some of the attractions of country life to town-dwellers.

SUBWAY, *n* - not an underground train system, but an underground passage enabling pedestrians to cross a busy road. US subway = GB tube or underground.

SULTANA, *n* - a large raisin.

SUMP, *n* - the oil pan.

SUN BLIND, *n* - a blind that shades a room from the glare of the sun.

SUNDOWNER, *n (col)* - an alcoholic drink taken at sundown.

SUNRAY PLEATS, *pl n* - sunburst pleats.

SUPER, *interj* - an enthusiastic expression of approval or assent.

SUPERTAX, *n* - a graduated surtax on high incomes.

SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS, *pl n* - formerly, weekly welfare payments made to various groups of people, e.g. pensioners, to bring their incomes up to minimum levels established by law. Replaced in 1986 by *income support*.

SUPPLY TEACHER, *n* - a substitute teacher.

SUPREMO, *n* - a person who has overall au-

thority, e.g. in an organization or military force.

SURGERY, *n* - a doctor's or dentist's office, as well as the period during which a doctor sees patients. *He saw the poster in the doctor's surgery. Outside surgery hours, please phone the emergency number.* By analogy, a regular period of time when constituents can visit their member of parliament or local councillor to discuss their problems.

SURROUND, *n* - a border, especially the area of uncovered floor between the walls of a room and the carpet, or around an opening or panel.

SURVEY, *v* - to inspect a building to determine its condition and value. Used also as a noun. A **SURVEYOR** is a person who inspects things officially to evaluate them.

SUSPENDERS, *n* - an elastic strap for holding up stockings, but not trousers. Trousers are held up by **BRACES**.

SUSS or **SUSSY**, *adj (col)* - suspect. *Don't ask too many questions, they might think that a bit suss.* To **SUSS SOMETHING OUT** means to discover how it works or how to do it, to **SUSS SOMEONE OUT** is to discover their true character. *She had me sussed out in the first five minutes.*

SWAGGER CANE, *n* - another name for a swagger stick, a short cane occasionally carried by army officers.

SWAN-UPPING, *n* - the practice of marking the beaks of young swans with a sign of ownership. Royal cygnets on the Thames are marked in this way annually.

SWEDE, *n* - rutabaga or Swedish turnip.

SWEET, *n* - 1. a pudding, fruit, or any sweet dish served as dessert. 2. a piece of candy. **SWEETS** or *(col)* **SWEETIES** are candy and are sold in a **SWEET SHOP**, a candy store.

SWING THE LEAD, *v (col)* - to malingering or make excuses, to goldbrick.

SWINGEING, *adj* - punishing, causing great harm or hardship, severe. *It was a swingeing indictment of her policies. Swingeing tax increases.*

SWISH, *adj (col)* - fashionable, smart.

SWISS ROLL

SWISS ROLL, *n* - jelly roll.

SWITCHBACK, *n* - another word for a roller coaster or anything resembling one, e.g. a mountain road which rises and falls sharply many times or has many sharp bends.

SWIZ or **SWIZZ**, *n (col)* - a swindle. The verb is to **SWIZZLE**, to cheat.

SWOT, *v (col)* - to study hard. Also, as a noun, a person who does so, disapprovingly considered. Before an examination, you **SWOT UP** a subject.

SYLLABUB, *n* - a cold dessert made from milk or cream beaten with sugar, wine, and lemon juice.

SYLLABUS, *n* - the subjects studied for a particular course.

T

TA, *interj (col)* - thank you. *'Ta,' she said, as I handed her the book.*

TA-TA, *sent sub (col)* - goodbye. *'Tata,' he said, 'Be seeing you'.*

TABLE, *v* - not to suspend discussion of a bill, but, on the contrary, to submit it for consideration by a legislative body.

TAFFY, *n (col)* - a Welshman.

TAKEAWAY, *adj & n* - take-out, food to go. *He lives on takeaway food. Why don't we get a Chinese takeaway? Have you tried the new Indian takeaway?*

TANK UP, *v* - 1. to fill the tank of a car with gasoline. 2. *(col)* - to drink a large quantity of alcohol.

TAP, *n* - a faucet.

TAPE, *v (col)* - to take stock of a person or situation. Usually used in the passive. *He had the job taped in the first couple of days.*

TART, *n* - 1. a pie. 2. a prostitute or sexually promiscuous woman. The verb **TART UP** means to dress up in a tawdry, garish way.

TATTY, *n* - shabby, tawdry, unkempt.

TEA LEAF, *n (col)* - rhyming slang for a thief. As a verb meaning to thief or steal, it be-

comes **TEA-LEAVE**. *He tea-leaved it, didn't he?*

TEA TROLLEY, *n* - a tea cart.

TEACAKE, *n* - a flat cake made from a yeast dough with raisins in it, usually eaten toasted and buttered.

TEAR, *v (col)* - in the expression **TEAR SOMEONE OFF A STRIP**: to reprimand or rebuke someone severely.

TEARAWAY, *n* - a reckless and unruly young person.

TEASHOP or **TEAROOM**, *n* - a restaurant where tea and light refreshments are served.

TEAT, *n* - the nipple on a baby's bottle.

TELEPHONIST, *n* - a telephone operator. Pronounced *tel-eff-on-ist*.

TELEPRINTER, *n* - a teletypewriter.

TELLY, *n (col)* - short for television.

TENNER, *n (col)* - a ten-pound note.

TERM, *n* - in Britain the academic year falls into three terms, as opposed to the two semesters of the US academic year.

TERMS OF TRADE, *pl n* - in economics, the ratio of export prices to import prices. This ratio measures a nation's trading position, which improves when export prices rise faster or fall slower than import prices.

TERRACE, *n* - a row of houses, usually identical, joined together. A terraced house is a row house, a town house. *They live in Grosvenor Terrace.*

TERRACES, *pl n* - the unroofed tiers around a soccer pitch on which spectators stand.

TERRITORIAL ARMY, *n* - a standing reserve army. A **TERRITORIAL** is a part-time reserve soldier.

TEST MATCH, *n* - an international cricket match.

THICK, *adj (col)* - 1. stupid, slow. A **THICKIE** is a slow-witted person. 2. in the expression **A BIT THICK**: unfair or excessive. *You want me to work an extra ten hours a week? That's a bit thick, isn't it?*

TICK, *n (col)* - 1. a moment or instant. *I'll be with you in a tick, love.* 2. credit or an amount of credit, especially in the phrase **ON TICK**: *They let me have it on tick.*

TICK OFF, *v (col)* - to scold, reprimand.

TICK OVER, *n* - of a car's engine, to run with

TICKTACK

TOY BOY

the transmission disengaged, to idle. Figuratively, to run smoothly without any major changes. *All I'm asking you to do is to keep the firm ticking over until I get back.*

TICKTACK, *n* - a system of sign language, mainly using the hands, by which bookmakers at race tracks transmit their changing odds to each other.

TIDDLER, *n* (*col*) - 1. a very small fish, especially a stickleback or minnow. 2. a very small child, especially one who is undersized for its age.

TIDDLY, *adj* - 1. small, tiny. 2. (*col*) - slightly drunk.

TIDEMARK, *n* - 1. a mark showing a level reached by a liquid. *He never washes the bath after using it - dirty bugger always leaves a big black tidemark behind him.* 2. a dirty mark on the skin, indicating the extent to which someone has washed.

TIE, *n* - a match or game in an eliminating competition, e.g. *a cup tie*.

TIGHTS, *pl n* - pantyhose.

TIMBERYARD, *n* - a lumberyard.

TIME, *n* - in bars and pubs, closing time. *Time, gentlemen, please. Drink up now. Time, please.*

TIN, *n* - a can. But the two words are not interchangeable. E.g. Britons speak of a 'tin of peaches', a 'tin of soup', and a 'tin opener', but of 'a can of beer', a 'can of worms', and canned music.

TIN, *adj* - made of corrugated or galvanized iron. *A tin roof.*

TINKER, *n* - in Scotland and Ireland, another name for a gypsy.

TINKLE, *n* (*col*) - 1. a telephone call. 2. a piss, a leak.

TINPOT, *adj* (*col*) - cheap, inferior, unimportant.

TIP, *v* - to dump rubbish. As a noun, it means an area for dumping something, such as garbage, e.g. from a mine.

TIP THE WINK, *v* (*col*) - to give a hint or let someone know something secretly. *I'll tip you the wink when it's safe to come back.*

TIPSTAFF, *n* - an official in a law court. His principal function is to see that order is main-

tained.

TOAD-IN-THE-HOLE, *n* - a dish made of sausages baked in a batter.

TOBACCONIST, *n* - a shop that sells cigarettes, tobacco, pipes, etc.

TOD, *n* - in the expression **ON ONE'S TOD**: on one's own.

TOERAG, *n* (*col*) - a contemptible person. The term originally meant a beggar, referring to the pieces of rag beggars wrapped round their feet.

TOFF, *n* (*col*, old) - a rich, well-dressed, or upper-class man.

TOFFEE-NOSED, *adj* - stuck-up, supercilious, pretentious, used especially of snobbish people.

TOMBOLA, *n* - a kind of lottery in which the winning tickets are drawn from a revolving drum.

TOMMY, *n* (*col*) - a private in the British army. Short for Tommy Atkins, a name often used on sample forms.

TON, *n* - 1GB ton = 2240 pounds or 1016.047 kilograms. 1 US ton = 2000 pounds or 907.184 kilograms.

TOP UP, *v* - 1. to raise the level of something, e.g. a liquid or powder, usually bringing it to the brim of a container. *Can you top up the sugar in those bowls.* 2. to add money, e.g. to a bank account, in order to keep it at an acceptable level.

TORCH, *n* - a flashlight.

TORY, *n* - a member of the Conservative Party. The word derives from Irish Gaelic *tóraidhe*, a robber or outlaw.

TOSS OFF, *v* (*col*) - to masturbate. A **TOSSER** is someone who does so, or, more often, a worthless person. The expression **NOT GIVE A TOSS** means not to care.

TOTTING, *n* - the practice of searching through trash for usable or saleable items.

TOUCH UP, *v* (*col*) - to touch or caress someone, usually with a view to arousing sexual feelings.

TOWER BLOCK, *n* - a high residential or office building.

TOY BOY, *n* - the much younger male lover of an older woman.

TRADE UNION

TRADE UNION, *n* - a labor union.

TRADESPEOPLE, *pl n* - storekeepers.

TRAFFIC WARDEN, *n* - a person who is appointed to supervise road traffic and report traffic offences.

TRAM, *n* - a streetcar. A **TRAMWAY** or **TRAMLINE** is a streetcar line.

TRAPEZIUM, *n* - a trapezoid, i.e. a quadrilateral with two parallel sides of unequal length.

TRAVELLING PEOPLE, *pl n* - gypsies or other itinerant people. They use this term to describe themselves.

TREACLE, *n* - similar to molasses.

TRENDY, *adj (col)* - consciously fashionable. The word is often used derogatorily. *It's one of London's trendiest nightclubs. Every time I turn on the box, I get trendy intellectuals talking about life.*

TRICK CYCLIST, *n (col)* - a shrink, psychiatrist.

TRIFLE, *n* - a cold dessert made with sponge cake spread with fruit, soaked in wine or sherry, and covered with a custard sauce and cream.

TRIPPER, *n* - a tourist or excursionist.

TROUSERS, *pl n* - pants. GB pants = US underpants. To **WEAR THE TROUSERS** in a marriage is to wear the pants.

TRUNCHEON, *n* - a policeman's nightstick.

TRUNK CALL, *n* - a long-distance telephone call.

TUBE, **THE**, *n* - the subway, especially in London. Also called **THE UNDERGROUND**.

TUCK, *n (col)* - a schoolchild's word for food, especially pastry and candy.

TUP, *n* - an uncastrated male sheep, a ram.

TUPPENCE or **TWOPENCE**, *n* - a very small amount. *He doesn't care tuppence about politics.*

TURF ACCOUNTANT, *n* - the formal name for a bookmaker.

TURF OUT, *n (col)* - to throw out. *They were turfed out of the club.*

TURN-UPS, *pl n* - trouser cuffs.

TWEE, *adj* - excessively sentimental, sweet or pretty. *They live in a twee little cottage in a twee little village.* Derived from *tweet*, a mincing or affected pronunciation of *sweet*.

TWIG, *v* - to realize or understand something.

She kept dropping hints but still he didn't twig.

TWISTER, *n* - a swindling or dishonest person.

TWIT, *n (col)* - an idiot.

TYKE, *n (col)* - a person from Yorkshire or a boor.

U

U, *adj (col)* - characteristic of the upper class, especially as regards language habits. Cf. non-U.

U CERTIFICATE, *n* - the equivalent of a 'g' rating in the US, allowing admission to movies of persons of all ages.

UNDERCARRIAGE, *n* - the landing gear of an aircraft.

UNDERSEAL, *n* - the undercoat of a car, applied to prevent corrosion.

UNIONIST, *adj* - relating to trade unionism.

UNIT TRUST, *n* - a mutual fund.

UNOFFICIAL STRIKE, *n* - another term for a wild-cat strike.

UP, *n* - in the expression **ON THE UP AND UP**: on the upward trend or movement. *After several hard years, the company's finally on the up and up again.*

UPPISH, *adj (col)* - snobbish, arrogant, presumptuous.

V

VAN, *n* - a closed railroad car used for carrying baggage, freight or mail. *A heap of luggage had been thrown from the guard's van.*

VARNISH, *n* - another word for nail polish.

VAT, *n (abbr)* - value-added tax, a tax on practically all products and services, ultimately paid by the consumer. Comparable

VC

WHITEHALL

to sales tax, but included in the price marked on the product.

VC, *n* (abbr) - the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest military award for conspicuous valor.

VERGE, *n* - the shoulder of a road.

VEST, *n* - an undershirt. US vest = GB waistcoat.

VET, *v* - to subject to thorough examination or evaluation. *Weaponry purchased by police forces is carefully vetted. Before he was appointed, he was very thoroughly vetted.*

VETERAN, *n* - a soldier who has seen considerable active service, not simply an ex-serviceman.

VICE-CHANCELLOR, *n* - the chief administrator of a university. See **CHANCELLOR**.

VILLA, *n* - a detached or semidetached suburban house.

VILLAIN, *n* (col) - a criminal. Police and underworld slang. *Villains like to hear themselves talking, that's why we catch so many.*

VIVA, *n* - an oral examination.

VOUCHER, *n* - a ticket or card serving as a substitute for cash. *A gift voucher.*

W

WAFFLE ON, *v* (col) - to speak or write in a vague or wordy manner. *He waffled on interminably about what Yeats was 'painting a picture of'.* As a noun, waffle is verbal padding.

WAISTCOAT, *n* - vest. GB vest = US undershirt, T-shirt.

WALLY, *n* - a stupid person.

WANK, *v* (col) - to masturbate. A **WANKER** is a masturbator, or, in a very common usage, a stupid or useless fellow.

WANT, *v* - to need (doing). *I expect the house will want cleaning up a bit.*

WARDEN, *n* - a park ranger.

WARDER or (fem) **WARDRESS**, *n* - a prison guard.

WASH UP, *n* - to wash the dishes.

WASHING POWDER, *n* - soap powder.

WATERPROOF, *n* - another name for a raincoat.

WEAR, *v* (col) - to accept or put up with something. *He's gone too far this time and I'm not going to wear it. Bill won't wear that argument.*

WEE, *n* - the act of urinating, a leak. *Be back in a minute, just going for a wee.*

WEEK, *adv* - seven days before or after a specified day. *I'll be back on Friday week.*

WELL IN, *adj* (col) - on good terms with someone. *Ask Bill to help you, he's well in with their Personnel Manager.*

WELL-STACKED, *adj* (col) - of a woman, having large breasts. Voluptuously proportioned.

WELLINGTONS or **WELLINGTON BOOTS**, *pl n* - knee-length rubber boots, worn especially in wet or muddy conditions. Informally, shortened to **WELLIES**.

WEST END, *n* - a part of west central London containing the main shopping and entertainment areas.

WESTMINSTER, *n* - the part of central London in which Parliament is situated, hence often used to mean the center of government.

WET, *adj* - feeble, foolish, ineffectual. Used in a political context, as a noun, the word refers to a Conservative politician who is considered not to be a hard-liner (a dry).

WHACK, *n* - a share or part. *Whatever happens, I want my whack - that was the agreement. Don't worry about Dick, he always pays his whack.*

WHACKING, *adj & adv* (col) - enormous. *A whacking great piece of pie, a whacking big lie.*

WHIP, *v* (col) - to steal something.

WHIP-ROUND, *n* - an impromptu collection of money. *Somebody organized a whip-round at the office to buy her a wedding present.*

WHIPPET, *n* - a swift, short-haired dog resembling a greyhound but smaller, developed for racing in some parts of England.

WHIRLIGIG, *n* - a pinwheel.

WHISKY, *n* - Scotch whisky.

WHITE SPIRIT, *n* - a substitute for turpentine.

WHITEHALL, *n* - a street in London where most

WHOLEMEAL

YOB OR YOBBO

of the important ministries are located, hence often used to mean the executive side of government.

WHOLEMEAL, *adj* - whole-wheat.

WICK, *n (col)* - in the expression **GET ON SOMEONE'S WICK**: to irritate or annoy. *Listen, mate, you're beginning to get on my wick.*

WICKET, *n* - in cricket, the three stumps stuck in the ground behind the batsman which the bowler tries to hit with the ball. Colloquially, to be **ON A GOOD WICKET** is to be in an advantageous position, while to be **ON A STICKY WICKET** is to be in an awkward one.

WIDE, *adj (col)* - unscrupulous and astute. A **WIDE BOY** is a professional cheat.

WILLIE, *n (col)* - a childish or humorous term for penis. *Apo's a voluptuary... he's one of those little men who's got to prove he's got a bigger willie than all the big men put together* (John le Carré).

WIND UP, *v (col)* - to tease someone.

WINDCHEATER, *n* - a windbreaker.

WINDSCREEN, *n* - windshield.

WINDY, *adj (col)* - afraid, frightened, nervous. To **GET THE WIND UP** is to become very frightened, usually with the result that one decides not to do something after all.

WING, *n* - the fender of a car.

WINKLE, *n* - an edible sea-snail with a spirally coiled shell.

WINKLE OUT, *v (col)* - to extract, to pry out. *Our officers usually manage to winkle out of people exactly what they want to know.*

WIRELESS, *n (old)* - radio.

WOBBLY, *n (col)* - especially in the expression **THROW A WOBBLY**, to become suddenly very agitated or angry.

WODGE, *n (col)* - a thick lump or chunk cut or broken off something.

WOG, *n (col)* - a derogatory term for a foreigner, especially one who is not white. Probably deriving from golliwog.

WONKY, *adj (col)* - shaky, unsteady, liable to break down. *The table's a bit wonky, see if you can slip something under one of the legs. He can't play tennis, he has a wonky knee. The trolley had a wonky wheel and you could hear it whistling down the lino-*

leum corridor (John le Carré).

WOODEN SPOON, *n* - another name for a booby prize, given to a person or team who comes last in a race or competition.

WOOLSACK, *n* - the seat of the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords, formerly made of a large square sack of wool.

WOOLY, *n* - a woollen garment, especially a sweater. Often used in the plural. *She was wearing a long, droopy wooly. They sat round the fire muffled in their woolies.*

WORK-TO-RULE, *n* - a form of disruptive labor action in which employees adhere rigidly to all the working regulations laid down by their employers, with the deliberate intention of reducing the rate of working.

WORKING PARTY, *n* - a committee established to investigate a problem or carry out some other specific function.

WORKS, *pl n* - a factory.

WRAC, *n (abbr)* - Women's Royal Army Corps. Equivalent to the WAC.

WRAF, *n (abbr)* - Women's Royal Air Force.

WRAP UP, *v (col)* - to be silent, shut up. Usually in the imperative.

WREN, *n (col)* - a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service. From the abbreviation WRNS.

Y

Y-FRONTS, *pl n* - boy's or men's underpants with a front opening inside an inverted Y shape.

YANK or **YANKEE**, *n (col)* - any person from the USA, whether from the North or the South.

YARD, *n* - a small piece of ground either paved or laid with concrete adjoining a house. With grass it is a garden, irrespective of size. US yard = GB garden.

YARD, THE, *n (col)* - Scotland Yard.

YOB or **YOBBO**, *n (col)* - a hooligan, an aggressive, surly, badly-behaved, working-class

YOMP

youth, usually in a group of his peers. *They looked a real bunch of yobs.*

YOMP, *v (col)* - to walk or trek laboriously, especially over difficult terrain while carrying a heavy load. Originally military slang.

YONKS, *pl n (col)* - a very long time, ages. *I haven't seen her for yonks.*

YORKSHIRE PUDDING, *n* - a light, puffy baked pudding made from a batter of flour, eggs and milk, traditionally eaten with roast beef.

YOUR ACTUAL, *adj (col)* - a meaningless phrase used, often facetiously, as an intensifier: *That's a lovely piece of music - that's your actual Mozart, that is.*

Z

ZED, *n* - spoken form of the letter 'z'. Zee.

PART FIVE

A to Zee: a US / GB lexis

A

À LA KING, *adj* - cooked in cream sauce with green pepper or pimiento and mushrooms, as in *chicken à la king*.

À LA MODE, *adj* - with ice cream, as in *apple pie à la mode*.

ABOLITION, *n* - the emancipation of the slaves, accomplished by the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. An **ABOLITIONIST** was an anti-slavery campaigner.

ACCESSORY APARTMENT, *n* - another name for a granny flat. Also called an in-law rental and a mother-in-law apartment.

ACE, *v (col)* - to get the better of someone. *The candidate aced his opponents in the primaries.*

ACETAMINOPHEN, *n* - paracetamol.

ADJUSTER, *n* - an insurance assessor.

ADMINISTRATION, *n* - the people, appointed by the President, who constitute the executive branch of the government. Americans speak of the Clinton administration as Britons would of the Blair government. In this sense, the word is often written with a capital.

AFL-CIO, *n (abbr)* - American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, the national trade union body. At the end of the 1990s, approximately 70% of all US union members belonged to the AFL-CIO's affiliated unions.

AIR CUSHION VEHICLE or (*abbr*) **ACV**, *n* - a hovercraft.

AIRHEAD, *n (col)* - an irresponsible person. *How can you even think of giving a sensitive job like this to an airhead like Sophie?*

ALDERMAN, *n* - a member of the municipal legislative body in a town or city in many jurisdictions.

ALL-AMERICAN, *adj* - 1. chosen as the best amateur in the US in a particular sporting event or position, e.g. *an all-American full-back*. 2. representative of the ideals of the people of the US: *an all-American boy*.

ALLIGATOR CLIP, *n* - crocodile clip.

ALLIGATOR PEAR, *n* - another name for an avo-

cado. Avocado trees supposedly grow in areas infested by alligators.

ALMA MATER, *n* - the school, college or university that one has attended. Latin: *nourishing mother*.

ALTERNATE, *n* - a person acting in the place of another, a substitute. Pronounced *all-tar-nat*.

ALUMNUS, *n* - A male graduate or former student of a university. The Latin masculine plural, **ALUMNI**, is commonly used for graduates of both sexes. However, the feminine form *alumna* and its plural *alumnae* also exist, enabling the joint plural **ALUMNI AND ALUMNAE**.

AMBROSIA, *n* - a dessert containing mainly oranges, bananas and flaked coconut.

AMBULANCE-CHASER, *n (col)* - a lawyer who gains clients by persuading accident victims to sue for damages, or, in a wider sense, one who stirs up business in unethical ways.

AMERICAN LEGION, *n* - a large ex-servicemen's organization, noted for its patriotic stance.

AMERICAN PLAN, *n* - a hotel rate which includes some meals. Similar to half-board. Cf. **EUROPEAN PLAN**.

AMTRAK, *n* - the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, which operates major intercity rail services.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST, *n* - an anaesthetist.

ANGEL FOOD CAKE, *n* - a light, fluffy, almond-flavoured sponge cake.

ANGELENO, *n* - a native or inhabitant of Los Angeles.

ANNAPOLIS, *n* - the capital of Maryland and home of the US Naval Academy, often referred to by the name of the city. Thus, the equivalent of Dartmouth in GB.

ANNE OAKLEY, *n* - a free ticket or pass. Named after the famed markswoman because of the association of the hole punched in the ticket and a bullet hole.

ANTE UP, *v* - to pay or to pay up, as in *Let's ante up the bill*. The ante is each player's stake in a poker game. See **PENNY-ANTE**.

ANTEBELLUM, *adj* - of or pertaining to the period before the Civil War, i.e. before 1861:

ANTENATAL

the antebellum South, an antebellum mansion.

ANTENATAL, *adj* - another word for prenatal.

ANTENNA, *n* - aerial.

ANTSY, *adj* - restless, fidgety, apprehensive.
The longer his speech dragged on, the antsier his audience became.

APARTMENT, *n* - a flat. An apartment house or apartment building is a block of flats.

APE, *adj (col)* - completely unrestrained, especially with enthusiasm. To **GO APE**, or more crudely, to **GO APESHIT** over something means to become wildly excited or enthusiastic about it.

APPALOOSA, *n* - a sturdy breed of saddle horse characterised by its spotted rump.

APPLE BETTY, *n* - apple crumble.

APPLE BUTTER, *n* - a sauce made from stewed spiced apples.

APPLE POLISHER, *n (old)* - a sycophant or toady.

APPLE-PIE, *adj* - 1. nearly perfect. If something is **IN APPLE-PIE ORDER**, it is shipshape or in good order. 2. characterised by values regarded as distinctly American.

APPLEJACK, *n* - a brandy distilled from cider, usually homebrewed.

APPLESAUCE, *n (col)* - nonsense, foolishness.

APPRAISE, *v* - to value a house. The person who performs this **APPRAISAL** is an **APPRAISER**.

AREA CODE, *n* - dialling code.

AREA RUG, *n* - a large rug.

ARMORY, *n* - a building in which training in the use of arms and drill takes place, a drill hall.

ASH CAN, *n* - dustbin.

ASPCA or **SPCA**, *n (abbr)* - American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Equivalent of the **RSPCA**.

ASS, *n (col)* - 1. arse. 2. sexual intercourse or a woman considered sexually, especially in the phrase **A PIECE OF ASS**.

ASSEMBLY, *n* - the lower chamber in various state legislatures.

ASSIGNMENT, *n* - homework.

ATM, *n (abbr)* - a cash dispenser. Short for Automatic Teller Machine.

ATTABOY or **ATTAGIRL**, *n (col)* - a pat on the back, a commendation.

ATTITUDE, *n (col)* - especially in the expres-

sion **HAVE AN ATTITUDE**: to be resentful, hostile and generally uncooperative.

ATTORNEY, *n* - another word for lawyer.

AUDIT, *v* - at university, to attend a course without seeking or receiving an academic credit for it.

AUTOMAT, *n* - an automated restaurant where food and drink are dispensed from vending machines.

AWESOME, *adj (col)* - great, outstanding, brilliant. *Sampras played a really awesome game.*

B

BABBIT, *n* - a complacent and narrow-minded middle-class American. After the main character of the novel *Babbitt* by Sinclair Lewis. Also, **BABBITY**.

BABY CARRIER, *n* - a carrycot.

BACK UP, *v* - 1. to drive a car in reverse. Reversing lights are **BACK-UP LIGHTS**. 2. to cause to accumulate, as in *The accident backed the traffic up for miles.*

BACKLOG, *n* - a desirable reserve of something, e.g. *a backlog of orders*. But also, as in GB, an undesirable accumulation of something, e.g. work or correspondence.

BAD, *n (col)* - very good, great. Declined **BADDER**, **BADDEST**. A black slang usage attested from slavery times.

BAD NEWS, *n (col)* - 1. a persistently annoying, unpleasant or dangerous person. *Stay away from him, he's bad news.* 2. a regrettable situation or event.

BAD-MOUTH, *v (col)* - to criticize or disparage, often spitefully or unfairly. *Personally I don't like the guy, but that doesn't mean I'm going to bad-mouth him.*

BAG LADY, *n* - a homeless or destitute woman who wanders city streets with all her possessions in shopping bags.

BAGEL, *n* - a breadroll in a doughnut shape. It has a tough, chewy texture.

BAGMAN, *n (col)* - a person who collects money for racketeers.

BAGS, *pl n* - suitcases.

BALL, *n* - baseball. Also **BALL PARK**, **BALL PLAYER**, etc. A **BALL PARK FIGURE** is a rough estimate.

BALL, *v (col)* - to have sexual intercourse with.

BALLSY, *adj (col)* - tough, courageous, gutsy.

BALLYHOO, *n* - sensational advertising. Used as a verb, it means to publicize by sensational or blatant methods.

BALONEY, *n* - a variant of *bologna*, a large seasoned and smoked Italian sausage. Informally, as in GB, it means nonsense.

BANANA OIL, *n (col)* insincere flattery or exaggerated nonsense.

BANANAS, *adj & adv (col)* - crazy. *The heat and the noise are enough to drive you bananas.*

BAND-AID, *n* - a trademark for a kind of sticking plaster, now a generic word. Used figuratively, it means a patch-up job: *True welfare reform is being bypassed for Band-Aid solutions.*

BANG, *v (col)* - to hump, screw, have sexual intercourse with.

BANG, *n (col)* - thrill, excitement. *We really got a bang out of seeing him in person.*

BANGS, *pl n* - hair in a fringe.

BANKROLL, *n* - a roll of banknotes or one's ready cash. Colloquially used as a verb, meaning to finance or underwrite the expenses of a venture.

BAR GIRL or **B-GIRL**, *n* - an attractive girl who works in a bar and whose job consists in encouraging male customers to buy drinks.

BARETTE, *n (col)* - hairslide.

BARF, *v (col)* - to vomit. A **BARF BAG** is a disposable paper or plastic bag provided to passengers by airlines for use in case of airsickness.

BARFLY, *n (col)* - a person who hangs around bars, usually a heavy drinker.

BARHOP, *v (col)* - to go on a pub crawl, although not necessarily with the deep sense of purpose implied by the British term.

BARKEEP or **BARKEEPER**, *n* - a bartender.

BARNSTORM, *v* - to travel around rural districts making political speeches, lecturing or presenting plays. From the original practice of

performing in barns.

BARREL ALONG, *v (col)* - to move or travel very fast, to belt along.

BARRIO, *n (col)* - the Spanish-speaking part of town.

BASE, *n* - in baseball, any of the four corners of the diamond, which runners have to reach in order to score. Many idiomatic expressions derive from this term. To **GET TO FIRST BASE** is to accomplish the first stage in a project or a series of objectives. To **GET TO HOME BASE** is to achieve one's goal. To **BE (WAY) OFF BASE** is to be badly mistaken. To **COVER ALL BASES** is to take care of everything or plan for all eventualities. To **TOUCH BASE** is to get in touch with someone. If **THE BASES ARE LOADED**, it's a make or break situation.

BASEBOARD, *n* - skirting board.

BASH, *n (col)* - a celebration or party. *They're throwing a big bash for their 50th wedding anniversary.*

BASKET CASE, *n (col)* - 1. a helpless, hopeless, distraught person. *If I had to worry about pleasing everybody, I'd be a basket case in no time.* 2. anything ruined or hopeless. *This company was a basket case when Mike took over, but he turned it round.*

BASSINET, *n* - an infant's crib.

BAT, *n (col)* - a binge, bender, drinking spree.

BATHE, *v* - to take a bath. It also has the GB meaning, to swim.

BATHROBE, *n* - a dressing gown.

BATHROOM, *n* - nearly always a euphemism for toilet.

BATHTUB, *n* - bath.

BATTENBOARD, *n* - perforated hardboard.

BATTER, *n* - in baseball, the player at bat. Idiomatically, if you are **BATTING A THOUSAND**, you are going great guns. Conversely, if you are **BATTING ZERO**, you are getting nowhere.

BAWL, *v* - to cry or sob loudly, to wail.

BAWL OUT, *v (col)* - to reprimand loudly or harshly.

BAY WINDOW, *n (col)* - a protruding belly, a paunch.

BAYOU, *n* - a sluggish marshy tributary of a lake or river of the southern US.

BAZOOKAS, BAZONGAS OR BAZOOMS, *pl n (col)* - a woman's breasts.

BB GUN, *n* - an air gun that shoots BBs, small lead pellets. A pellet gun.

BEAN, *n (col)* - another word for head. As a verb, it means to hit someone on the head with a thrown object, especially by accident with a pitched baseball.

BEANIE, *n* - a round close-fitting brimless hat resembling a skullcap.

BEANS, *pl n (col)* - a small amount, as in *I don't know beans about nuclear physics*. The expression **FULL OF BEANS**, as well as its GB sense of frisky or energetic, means badly mistaken: *I wouldn't believe what he says, he's full of beans*.

BEAT UP ON, *v* - to beat (someone) up. To **BEAT UP ON ONESELF** is to punish oneself.

BEAVER, *n (col)* - the female genitalia, especially with a display of pubic hair. Also an offensive term for a girl or woman. Kurt Vonnegut explains the origins of the term: *The expression was first used by news photographers, who often got to see up women's skirts at accidents and sporting events... They needed a code word to yell to other newsmen ... to let them know what could be seen. The word was this: 'Beaver!' (Breakfast of Champions)*

BEE, *n* - a social gathering with a specific purpose, e.g. to perform some communal task or hold a competition. *A quilting bee, a knitting bee*. A **SPELLING BEE** is a contest where participants are eliminated if they fail to spell words correctly.

BEET OR RED BEET, *n* - beetroot.

BELL PEPPER, *n* - green pepper.

BELLBOY OR BELLHOP, *n* - a man or boy employed by a hotel or club to carry luggage and answer calls for service, a porter.

BELT, *n (col)* - a swallow of something alcoholic. *He can't face an audience without taking a couple of belts first*.

BELTWAY, *n* - a ring road.

BENCH, *v* - in American football, to take someone out of the game and put him on the bench. Hence, figuratively, to put someone out of action.

BENEDICT ARNOLD, *n* - a Revolutionary General who betrayed the American cause to the British. Now, another term for traitor.

BENEFITS, *pl n* - health insurance and pension as part of a wage agreement.

BENT, *adj (col)* - in the expression **GET BENT OUT OF SHAPE**: to become very angry. *It was only a simple question, I don't know why he got all bent out of shape about it*.

BIAS PLY TIRE, *n* - a cross ply tyre.

BIBLE BELT, *n* - certain regions of the US, especially in the South, where Protestant fundamentalism is rampant.

BIG APPLE OR THE APPLE, *n (col)* - New York City.

BIG DIPPER, *n* - (constellation) the Plough.

BIGFOOT, *n* - see **SASQUATCH**.

BIG TIME, *adv (col)* - really, greatly. *You had your chance but you screwed up, I mean you blew it big time*.

BILL, *n* - a piece of paper money, a note, as in a ten-dollar bill. All currency notes are the same size and colour (green), differing only in the picture and denomination, which is printed in all four corners.

BILLBOARD, *n* - hoarding.

BILLFOLD, *n* - a type of wallet.

BILLION, *n* - a thousand million. GB billion (a million million) is now giving way to the US usage.

BILLY OR BILLY CLUB, *n* - a truncheon.

BIMBO, *n (col)* - a derogatory term for a girl or woman, especially one perceived as vacuous or over-interested in sex.

BIRCHER, *n* - a member or supporter of the **JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY**, founded in 1958, an ultra-nationalist anti-Communist organization.

BIRD DOG, *n* - a dog trained to retrieve game birds after they are shot, a gun dog.

BIRDER, *n* - another name for a bird watcher.

BISCUIT, *n* - similar to a scone. GB biscuit = US cookie.

BITCH, *v (col)* - to complain, whinge or grumble. Used as a noun, it means something very difficult or unpleasant.

BLACK, *n & adj* - Negro. Currently the usage in favour, supplanting 'Negro' and

BLACK-BAG JOB

BOMB

- 'coloured'. Sometimes written with a capital, sometimes without.
- BLACK-BAG JOB**, *n (col)* - a burglary conducted by police or federal agents in search of evidence but without a warrant.
- BLACKEN**, *v* - to coat fish or meat with pepper and other spices and then sear in a hot frying pan or over a strong flame, thereby producing food that is spicy and black on the outside but tender on the inside.
- BLACKJACK**, *n* - a leather-covered lead truncheon or cosh with a flexible shaft or strap.
- BLACKTOP**, *n* - a bituminous mixture used for surfacing roads, or a road covered with this material. Tarmac.
- BLANK**, *n* - an empty form, e.g. *a telegraph blank*.
- BLAST**, *n (col)* - a thrilling or pleasurable experience, often a party.
- BLEACHERS**, *pl n* - tiers of inexpensive, uncovered seats in a sports stadium or similar venue.
- BLINDERS**, *pl n* - blinkers on a horse.
- BLINDSIDE**, *v* - to catch someone unawares, especially with detrimental results.
- BLITZED**, *adj (col)* - drunk.
- BLOCK**, *n* - a city block bounded by streets on four sides. The distance between streets is often measured in blocks. A **BLOCK PARTY** is a neighbourhood celebration with the street closed to traffic.
- BLOCKBUSTING**, *n* - the practice of persuading white homeowners to sell their property quickly and cheaply by exploiting their fears of lower prices if racial minorities move into the area.
- BLOOPEER**, *n (col)* - a clumsy mistake, a blunder.
- BLOTTER**, *n* - official daily record of events in a police station.
- BLOW A FUSE**, *v (col)* - to lose one's temper. To **BLOW ONE'S LID** and **BLOW ONE'S STACK** mean the same.
- BLOW TORCH**, *n* - a blow lamp.
- BLOWHARD**, *n (col)* - a braggart, a loudmouth.
- BLOWOUT**, *n* - 1. a sudden rupture or bursting, especially of a car tyre. 2. *(col)* - a big party. A **BLOWOUT SALE** is one with large price reductions, often a clearance sale.
- BLT**, *n* - a bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich.
- BLUE BOOK OR BLUEBOOK**, *n* - an official list or people employed by the US government or a register of socially prominent people.
- BLUE CROSS** and **BLUE SHIELD**, *n* - the two largest private health-insurance companies in the US.
- BLUE LAWS**, *pl n* - a number of repressive puritanical laws of the colonial period, restricting shopping, drinking, entertainment and other secular activities on Sundays.
- BLUEGRASS**, *n* - a type of country music originating in Kentucky, the Bluegrass State.
- BLUENOSE**, *n* - a puritanical or prudish person.
- BOARD OF TRADE**, *n* - an unofficial association of bankers and business people to promote local commercial interests.
- BOARDWALK**, *n* - a promenade along the sea front, generally raised and made of planks. *Under the boardwalk, down by the sea, On a blanket with my baby is where I'll be (Drifters' song).*
- BOBBY PIN**, *n* - a hairgrip, kirby grip.
- BOBBY SOCKS**, *pl n* - ankle-length socks worn by girls and women. Colloquially a **BOBBY SOXER** is a girl who wears such socks, or simply a teenager.
- BOBCAT**, *n* - a wild cat of North America, related to but smaller than the lynx.
- BOCK BEER**, *n* - heavy, dark strong beer.
- BODACIOUS**, *adj (old)* - remarkable, extraordinary, prodigious. *He could eat a bodacious amount of food, and then ask for more.*
- BOFF**, *n (col)* - 1. a line in a play or film that gets a big laugh. 2. a conspicuous success, also called **BOFFO** or **BOFFOLA**. A showbiz term, probably deriving from **b(ox) off(ice)**.
- BOILED SHIRT**, *n* - a dress shirt with a stiff front.
- BOILERPLATE**, *n* - formulaic language, often superfluous. In journalism, material that is used merely to fill space.
- BOLL WEEVIL**, *n* - a beetle whose larvae live in and destroy cotton bolls.
- BOMB**, *v* - to fail miserably, to flop, especially in the theatre: *The play bombed*. Hence, the

BONDSMAN

BROWNIE

opposite of the UK meaning.

BONDSMAN, *n* - A person whose occupation is to stand surety, at a high interest rate, for suspected criminals released on bail.

BONE WRENCH, *n* - a box spanner.

BONER, *n* - a gaffe or blunder.

BOO-BOO, *n (col)* - a stupid mistake, a blunder.

BOOB TUBE, *n (col)* - television, the idiot box. Pronunciation: the vowel sounds are identical - *boob toob*.

BOOBY HATCH, *n (col)* - a mental hospital.

BOODLE, *n (col)* - bribe money, money gained by graft and corruption.

BOOGER, *n (col)* - dried nasal mucus, a bogey or snorter. It can also refer to any item whose name is unknown or forgotten: *It's one of those sharp little boogers you pull off the beer cans (Hunter S. Thompson)*.

BOONDocks or BOONIES, *pl n (col)* - backwoods, a wild and remote rural area.

BOONDOGGLE, *n (col)* - unnecessary, wasteful work. As a verb, to waste time or money on such work.

BOOSTER, *n* - 1. a person whose job is to promote something by singing its praises. 2. *(col)* - a shoplifter.

BOOT, *n* - 1. a rubber patch used to repair a puncture in a tyre. 2. a wheel clamp. GB boot = US trunk.

BOOT CAMP, *n* - a training camp for military recruits, especially to the US Navy or Marine Corps; the period of basic military training.

BOOTH, *n* - a (telephone) kiosk.

BOOZER, *n (col)* - the drinker, not the bar.

BOSS, *adj (col)* - first-rate, topnotch.

BOSTON BRAHMIN, *n* - a member of the old Anglo-Saxon aristocracy of Boston.

BOSTON CREAM PIE, *n* - a round cake with a custard or cream filling.

BOURBON, *n* - whisky distilled mainly from maize, added to malt and rye. Named after Bourbon County, Kentucky. Pronounced *burr-bon*.

BOWERY, *n* - a section of lower Manhattan in New York City, notorious for its petty criminals and derelicts.

BOX SCORE, *n* - A printed summary of a baseball game, in the form of a table listing the players and their positions and recording individual performances.

BOXCAR, *n* - a goods wagon on a train.

BRAIDS, *pl n* - plaits.

BRAKEMAN, *n* - a guard on a train.

BRANCH WATER or BRANCH, *n* - plain water, as opposed to carbonated water, especially when mixed with whisky.

BREEZEWAY, *n* - a covered, open-sided passageway, e.g. connecting a house and a garage.

BRIGHTS, *pl n* - the main beams of the headlights of a car.

BROAD, *n (col, old)* - a woman.

BROAD JUMP, *n* - another name for the long jump.

BROADSIDE, *v* - to crash into the side of another car. *You run the lights, some guy's going to broadside you for sure.*

BROASTED, *adj* - grilled and roasted. From *broil* and *roast*.

BRODIE or BRODEY, *n (col)* - in the expression **DO A BRODEY**: 1. to spin a car through 180 degrees. *The road was so slippery that when I braked, I did a brodie.* 2. to commit suicide, especially by jumping from a high place.

BROIL, *v* - to grill food. A **BROILER** is like a grill, but deeper.

BRONX CHEER, *n* - a loud fart-like noise made with the lips and tongue to express derision or contempt, a raspberry.

BROOKS BROTHERS, *adj* - in the conservative style of this men's clothing shop in New York.

BROWN BAGGING, *n* - the practice of taking one's lunch to work or of taking one's own alcohol into a restaurant where **SETUPS** are available. A person who does this is a **BROWN BAGGER**.

BROWN-NOSE, *v (col)* - to curry favour by servile or obsequious behaviour, to arse-lick. As a noun, it describes a person who behaves in this manner.

BROWNIE, *n* - a small, moist, chocolate-flavoured cake, often with nuts.

BROWNIE POINTS

BROWNIE POINTS, *n* - notional marks to one's credit for impressing a superior. From the practice of awarding points to Brownies in the Girl Scouts.

BROWNSTONE, *n* - a reddish-brown sandstone used in building, or a house built with this stone.

BRUNCH, *n* - a mid-morning meal, combining a late breakfast and an early lunch.

BTO, (*abbr, col*) - big time operator.

BUCK, *n (col)* - a dollar.

BUCK, *v (col)* - to resist or oppose stubbornly. *You can't buck the system forever.*

BUCKAROO, *n* - cowboy. An alteration of the Spanish word *vaquero*.

BUCKBOARD, *n (old)* - an open horse-drawn cart.

BUCKEYE, *n* - a horse chestnut, a conker.

BUCKSAW, *n* - a two-handled woodcutting saw with the blade usually set in an H-shaped frame.

BUDDY, *n (col)* - an informal word for friend. Also, as a term of address, *Bud*. Equivalent to GB *mate*.

BUFFALO, *n (col)* - 1. to intimidate, cow. 2. to deceive, hoodwink. 3. to confuse or bewilder.

BUFFALO WINGS, *pl n (col)* - spicy chicken wings.

BUFFET, *n* - a sideboard.

BUG, *v (col)* - 1. to irritate, pester or annoy. 2. of the eyes, to bulge or protrude: *His eyes bugged when he saw what she was wearing, and bugged even more when he saw what she wasn't.* To **BUG OUT** is to shirk a duty or a responsibility: *You could always rely on him to bug out on you at the least sign of trouble.* To **PUT A BUG IN SOMEONE'S EAR** is to give someone a useful piece of information discreetly, to mark someone's card.

BUG, *n* - 1. any insect, e.g. the **JUNE BUG** or the **LIGHTNING BUG**. 2. a devotee or enthusiast: *a model train bug*. 3. in poker, a joker used as an ace or wild card to fill out a straight or a flush.

BUILDING SITE, *n* - not a site where something is actually being constructed but a vacant

BUSBOY OR BUSSER

lot reserved for building.

BULL, *n (col)* - short for bullshit.

BULL SESSION, *n (col)* - an informal group discussion, usually among men.

BULLETIN BOARD, *n* - a notice board.

BULLHORN, *n* - a megaphone, loud-hailer.

BULLPEN, *n* - 1. a large cell where prisoners are temporarily confined together. 2. in baseball, an area where relief pitchers warm up during a game.

BUM, *n (col)* - 1. a tramp or a lazy, shiftless person. 2. an insignificant person: *I could've had class and been somebody. Real class. Instead of a bum, let's face it, which is what I am (On the Waterfront).*

BUM STEER, *n (col)* - see **STEER**.

BUMMER, *n (col)* - 1. A disagreeable person, event or situation, in particular an adverse reaction to a hallucinogenic drug. 2. a failure: *The trip was a bummer.*

BUNCH, *n (col)* - pile, lot, as in *He won a bunch of money at the racetrack. They have a bunch of kids. Thanks a bunch, you've been really helpful.*

BUNCO OR BUNKO, *v (col)* - a swindle, especially one by confidence tricksters. As a verb: to con.

BUNS, *pl n (col)* - buttocks. *She's got the neatest little buns. While you were down there enjoying yourself, we've been sitting up here freezing our buns off.*

BUNT, *v* - in baseball, to hit a pitched ball very gently.

BUREAU, *n* - a chest of drawers.

BURGLARIZE, *v* - to burgle

BURLAP, *n* - a coarse fabric woven from jute or hemp and used to make sacks or covering, hessian.

BURRO, *n* - a small donkey, especially one used as a pack animal. The word is Spanish.

BUS, *v* - to transport schoolchildren by bus from their own neighbourhood to a racially mixed school in another area, as a means of achieving racial integration.

BUSBOY OR BUSSER, *n* - A restaurant employee who clears away dirty dishes, sets tables and generally assists the waiters or wait-

BUSH LEAGUE

CARD

resses.

BUSH LEAGUE, *n* - in baseball, the minor training league. Often used metaphorically to connote amateurism, lack of status, inferior quality, etc.

BUSHEL, *n* - 1 US bushel = 0.03524 cubic metres, or 64 US pints. (1 Imperial bushel is equivalent to 0.03637 cubic metres.) Informally, the word means a large amount, a great deal.

BUSHWHACK, *v* (*old*) - 1. to ambush. 2. to fight as a guerrilla in wild terrain. 3. to cut or beat one's way through thick woods. The noun is **BUSHWHACKER**.

BUST, *v* (*col*) - 1. to arrest. 2. to smash or break: *They busted the machine*. 3. to demote, especially in military rank. 4. to break or tame, e.g. horses. 5. to fail.

BUST A GUT, *v* (*col*) - to laugh hard. *Martha didn't think I laughed loud enough. Martha thinks that unless ... as she demurely puts it ... that unless you 'bust a gut' you aren't amused* (Edward Albee).

BUSY SIGNAL, *n* - (telephone) engaged signal.

BUTT, *n* (*col*) - 1. cigarette. 2. backside, bum, buttocks.

BUTTON, *n* - a badge. *She was wearing a Bush campaign button*.

BUTTONED-DOWN, *adj* - conservative, conventional, unimaginative in style.

BVDs, *pl n* - BVD is a trade name for a brand of men's underwear so well known that, with a final s, it now means men's underwear in general: *Any Presidential candidate knows that he will be under constant scrutiny, right down to his BVDs*.

C

C-NOTE, *n* (*col, old*) - a hundred-dollar bill.

CABANA, *n* - a tent or hut on a beach or by a swimming pool, used as a changing room.

CABOOSE, *n* - the last wagon on a goods train with cooking and sleeping facilities for the

train crew.

CADDY, *n* - shopping trolley.

CAESAR SALAD, *n* - A tossed salad of lettuce, anchovies, croutons, grated cheese and a raw egg.

CALABOOSE, *n* (*col*) - a prison, jail.

CALL COLLECT, *v* - to make a reverse-charge phone call.

CALL-IN, *n* - another name for a phone-in.

CALLER ID, *n* - (telephone) caller display.

CALLING CARD, *n* - 1. equivalent of a telephone charge card, for use with a pay phone. 2. a visiting card.

CALLIOPE, *n* - a steam organ. Pronounced: *ka-lie-e-pee*.

CAN, *n* (*col*) - 1. a tin, as in a can of dogfood. 2. toilet, loo. 3. arse. *He fell on his can*. 4. jail or prison.

CAN, *v* (*col*) - 1. to stop, e.g. doing something annoying, especially in the expression **CAN IT!** 2. to dismiss from a job. 3. to preserve food. In the US fruit is canned in a Mason jar, the equivalent to bottling fruit in a Kilner jar.

CANDY, *n* - sweets. A candy store is a sweet shop.

CANDY APPLE, *n* - toffee apple.

CANDY STRIPER, *n* - a volunteer worker in a hospital. From the resemblance of the volunteer's red and white striped uniform to a **STICK CANDY**.

CANDY-ASS, *n* (*col*) - a sissy, a wimp.

CANUCK, *n* (*col*) - a Canadian. Formerly, a French-Canadian.

CANVASS, *v* - to scrutinize or to discuss thoroughly, in particular to inspect votes to determine their validity. It also has the GB meaning of soliciting votes or orders.

CAPITOL HILL, *n* - the hill on which the main building of the US Congress is located. Hence, Congress.

CAPTAIN, *n* - 1. a head waiter 2. a supervisor of bellboys in a hotel. 3. a district official for a political party.

CAR, *n* - a carriage, as in railroad car, dining car, etc.

CARAVAN, *n* - convoy.

CARD, *v* - to check someone's identification,

CARFARE

especially to verify their age.

CARFARE, *n* - money for fares on buses, tubes or trams.

CARHOP, *n* - a waiter or waitress at a drive-in restaurant.

CARNIVAL, *n* - a funfair.

CAROUSEL, *n* - merry-go-round.

CARPETBAGGER, *n* - a Northerner who went to the South after the Civil War to profit from RECONSTRUCTION. By extension, any outsider, especially a politician, who seeks to exploit a locality to his own advantage.

CARRYALL, *n* - 1. a holdall. 2. a closed car with two lengthwise seats facing each other.

CARRYOUT or **TAKEOUT**, *n* - a takeaway. Often used as a modifier, e.g. *some carryout sandwiches, the carryout counter*.

CASE or **DAIRY CASE**, *n* - in a supermarket, the area where milk and dairy products are found.

CASKET, *n* - another name for coffin.

CATCH SOME Z's, *v (col)* - to have a nap or zizz. Pronounced *zeeze*.

CATER-CORNERED or **CATTY-CORNERED**, *adj* - diagonal, diagonally placed. From the French word for four and pronounced *kat-er-kor-nerd*.

CATHOUSE, *n (col)* - brothel.

CATSUP, *n* - ketchup.

CAUCUS, *n* - 1. a closed meeting of the members of one party in a legislative chamber to make policy or leadership decisions, or such a group of politicians: the Republican caucus in Congress. 2. a local meeting of party members. As a verb, it means to hold a caucus.

CENTENNIAL, *n* - another name for centenary.

CENTRAL STANDARD TIME or **CENTRAL TIME** or (*abbr*) **CST**, *n* - standard time in the sixth time zone west of Greenwich, i.e. six hours behind GMT. One of four time zones in the US.

CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT or (*abbr*) **CD**, *n* - a savings certificate.

CERTIFIED CHECK, *n* - a cheque guaranteed by a bank to be covered by sufficient funds on deposit.

CERTIFIED MAIL, *n* - uninsured first-class mail

CHIEF JUSTICE

for which proof of delivery is obtained.

CHALKBOARD, *n* - blackboard.

CHAPS, *pl n* - heavy leather trousers without a seat worn by cowboys over their ordinary trousers to protect their legs.

CHAPSTICK, *n* - cylinder of a product for preventing or soothing chapped lips, lip-salve.

CHARLEY HORSE, *n (col)* - a cramp or stiffness, especially in the upper leg, caused by exertion or injury. Originally baseball slang.

CHARLIE, *n (col)* - the Vietcong. *Charlie launched a major offensive*.

CHARTER MEMBER, *n* - an original or founder member of a society or organization.

CHECK, *n* - 1. a bill in a restaurant or bar. 2. the usual spelling of cheque. A **CHECKING ACCOUNT** is a current account.

CHECK-OUT COUNTER, *n* - the cash desk in a supermarket.

CHECKER, *n* - the cashier in a supermarket.

CHECKERS, *n* - draughts. A draughtboard is a **CHECKERBOARD**.

CHECKING ACCOUNT, *n* - see **CHECK**.

CHECKROOM, *n* - a left-luggage office or a cloakroom.

CHEESY, *adj (col)* - vulgar, lacking in taste. *It was a hideous room, expensive but cheesy* (J.D. Salinger).

CHEF'S SALAD, *n* - a tossed green salad with raw vegetables, hard-boiled eggs and julienne strips of cheese and meat. A meal in itself.

CHERRY, *n (col)* - 1. a virgin, of either sex. 2. virginity, as in *He still hasn't lost his cherry*.

CHERRY PICKER, *n* - a mobile crane with a vertical boom to raise a person so that jobs like streetlight maintenance can be performed.

CHEW OUT, *v (col)* - to reprimand, to tell off.

CHICANO, *n* - a US citizen of Mexican origin. In some parts of the Southwest, the term is a badge of ethnic pride; in others, it is considered derogatory. A wholly acceptable synonym is Hispanic.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, *n* - the President of the US.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER or (*abbr*) **CEO**, *n* - managing director. Also called president.

CHIEF JUSTICE, *n* - the presiding judge of a high

CHIFFON

court having several judges, especially the US Supreme Court.

CHIFFON, *adj* - made frothy and light by the addition of beaten egg whites, as in *lemon chiffon pie*.

CHILL OUT, *v (col)* - to relax or to calm down.

Chill out and enjoy yourself, life is short. When the stress gets too much, we have this little place we go to chill out.

CHINCH, *n* - another name for a bedbug.

CHINOOK, *n* - a warm dry wind blowing down the easterly slopes of the Rocky Mountains and causing a sudden rise in temperature. Also called a snow eater.

CHIPPED BEEF, *n* - dried beef smoked and sliced very thin.

CHIPPER, *adj* - lively, cheerful, chirpy.

CHIPS, *pl n* - potato crisps. GB chips = French fries.

CHISEL, *v (col)* - to cheat or obtain by cheating.

CHOPPED LIVER, *n (col)* - something insignificant. *Why does she always ignore me? What am I? Chopped liver?*

CHORINE, *n* - chorus girl.

CHOW, *n (col)* - grub.

CHOWDER, *n* - a thick soup or stew containing fish, clams, potatoes, onions, and tomatoes.

CHUCK UP, *v (col)* - to vomit

CHUCK WAGON, *n (col)* - a wagon carrying cooking utensils and food for men working in the open, such as cowboys or ranch hands.

CHUTES AND LADDERS, *pl n* - snakes and ladders.

CHUTZPAH, *n (col)* - shameless audacity, unbelievable nerve, effrontery. Leo Rosten describes as having chutzpah a man who killed his father and mother and then threw himself on the mercy of the court because he was an orphan. A Yiddish word, pronounced *khoot-spah*.

CIGAR STORE, *n* - tobacconist's shop. Formerly a cigar-store Indian, i.e. a wooden effigy of a Native American brandishing a cluster of cigars, stood emblematically at the entrance.

CINCH, *n (col)* - an easy task, a piece of cake.

COLLEGE

CIRCULATING NURSE, *n* - a theatre sister.

CITY EDITOR, *n* - a newspaper editor responsible for local news and reporters' assignments. Unlike a British city editor, he has nothing to do with commercial or financial news.

CLAPBOARD, *n* - a long thin timber board with one end thicker than the other, used in wood-frame construction by lapping each board over the one below. Often used as a modifier, as in *a clapboard house*.

CLERK or SALESLERK, *n* - shop assistant. Pronounced *clurk*. Also called **SALESPERSON**.

CLOSET, *n* - a cupboard or wardrobe. A US cupboard is found only in the kitchen.

CLOSET, *adj (col)* - secret, undeclared. Used until recently only in such expressions as **CLOSET QUEEN**, meaning a secret male homosexual, or **COME OUT OF THE CLOSET**, meaning to acknowledge one's homosexuality publicly, it now has a wider application, e.g. *a closet alcoholic, closet information*.

CLOTHES PIN, *n* - clothes peg.

CLUNKER, *n (col)* - a decrepit old car, an old banger. *You actually bought that clunker?*

COASTER, *n* - a table mat placed under glasses and bottles to protect a table top or other surface.

COBBLER, *n* - a hot dessert made of fruit covered with a rich cakelike crust.

COED or CO-ED, *n* - a female undergraduate. Used as a modifier, as in *a coed university, a coed dorm* or *a coed pool*, it means open to both sexes. Derived from coeducational.

COFFEE CAKE, *n* - a cake or sweetened bread, usually containing nuts and raisins, to be taken with morning coffee. Not coffee-flavoured.

COFFEE KLATSCH or KAFFEEKLATSCH, *n* - a casual social gathering for coffee and conversation, usually among housewives.

COLLAR BUTTON, *n* - collar stud.

COLLAR STAY, *n* - collar stiffener.

COLLECT ON DELIVERY, *n* - cash on delivery.

COLLEGE, *n* - in everyday speech, synonymous with university. In the words of the song: *Old Bill Jones had a daughter and a son, The son went to college and the*

COLONIAL

daughter went wrong.

COLONIAL, *adj* - pertaining to the 13 British colonies which became the original US in 1776, or referring to the period which preceded independence.

COME ON TO, *v (col)* - to make a sexual advance at someone. The noun is **COME-ON**, either a sexual approach or proposal, or, commercially, an enticement to buy.

COMER, *n* - a person who is a potential success, e.g. *a political comer*.

COMFORT STATION, *n (old)* - public convenience.

COMFORTER, *n* - a quilted bed covering, an eiderdown.

COMMENCEMENT, *n* - a ceremony at which academic degrees or diplomas are conferred.

COMMISSARY, *n* - 1. a supermarket supplying food or equipment in a mining or military camp. 2. a cafeteria, especially in a film or television studio.

COMMON STOCK, *n* - ordinary shares.

COMMUTER TICKET, *n* - season ticket.

COMSTOCKERY, *n* - immoderate censorship on the grounds of immorality. Coined by G.B. Shaw after his play *Mrs Warren's Profession* had to be closed in New York because of the agitation of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, founded by Anthony Comstock.

CONCERTMASTER, *n* - the first violinist and assistant conductor in a symphony orchestra.

CONCOURSE, *n* - an open space where people can gather or walk, often with shops, e.g. in an airport or railway station.

CONDOMINIUM, *n* - An individually owned flat in a block of flats where common areas are jointly owned. Often shortened to **CONDO**. Owners of condos frequently time-share or lease to others.

CONDUCTOR, *n* - a railway official in charge of a train.

CONE, *n* - a cornet, as in *an ice cream cone*.

CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR 10X, *n* - icing sugar. Confectioner's sugar 4X is castor sugar.

CONFIDENCE COURSE, *n* - (military) another name for an obstacle course.

CONGRESSMAN or CONGRESSWOMAN, *n* - a mem-

CORNPONE OR PONE

ber of Congress, specifically of the lower house, the House of Representatives.

CONNECT, *v* - 1. on the telephone, to put through. 2. *(col)* - to be successful.

CONSTRUCTIONIST, *n* - a person who construes a legal text, especially the Constitution, in a particular way. Members of the Supreme Court, for example, are often divided into strict constructionists, who interpret the texts narrowly, and loose constructionists.

COOKIE, *n* - a sweet biscuit. A **COOKIE SHEET** is a baking tray. To be **CAUGHT WITH ONE'S HAND IN THE COOKIE JAR** is to be caught in the act. To **TOSS ONE'S COOKIES** is to vomit.

COOKOUT, *n (col)* - a party where a meal is cooked and eaten out of doors.

COOL, *adj (col)* - excellent, first-rate. *We had a cool time at the party.*

COOLER, *n* - 1. an insulated box for keeping food and drinks cool, a coolbox. 2. *(col)* a jail.

COON, *n (col)* - raccoon. Also, as in GB, an insulting term for a black person.

COP OUT, *v (col)* - to fail to assume a responsibility or to commit oneself. The noun is **COP-OUT**.

COPASETIC or COPESETIC, *adj (col, old)* - completely satisfactory, excellent.

COPING SAW, *n* - fretsaw.

CORD, *n* - electrical wire, flex.

CORDUROY ROAD, *n* - a road over swampy ground, made of logs laid down transversely.

CORN, *n* - maize.

CORNBALL, *n (col)* - a person who behaves in a mawkish or unsophisticated way. As a modifier, it means unsophisticated, corny, or ridiculous: *The kid told a bunch of cornball jokes. Where did you get that cornball hat?*

CORNBREAD, *n* - a bread made from maize meal. Also known as Indian bread.

CORNDODGER or DODGER, *n* - a small round ball of cornmeal, flour, milk, oil and sugar that is fried hard. Chiefly Southern US.

CORNEBEEF, *n* - salt beef.

CORNPONE or PONE, *n* - plain corn bread usually shaped into a flat cake and fried on a

CORNSTARCH

griddle. Also called johnnycake. As a modifier, it means folksy, homespun in manner or speech: *He had a penchant for cornpone humor.*

CORNSTARCH, *n* - cornflour.

CORPORATION, *n* - limited company.

COT, *n* - camp bed.

COTTON, *v* (*col*) - to take a liking to. *The dog ain't naturally vicious, it just don't cotton to strangers.* To **COTTON UP** to someone is to suck up to them.

COTTON CANDY, *n* - candy floss.

COTTONWOOD, *n* - a kind of N. American poplar, whose seeds have a tuft of cottony hairs.

COUCH POTATO, *n* (*col*) - a person who lounges around watching television. *He's not a couch potato like you, he actually goes out sometimes and does things.*

COULEE, *n* - a steep-sided ravine formed by heavy rain or melting snow, or an intermittent stream in such a ravine. From French *coulée*, to flow. Pronounced *koo-lay*.

COUNSELOR, *n* - 1. a lawyer, especially one who conducts cases in court. 2. a person who supervises children at a summer camp.

COUNTERCLOCKWISE, *adj & adv* - anticlockwise

COUNTERMAN, *n* - a man who tends a snack bar or lunch counter.

COUPÉ or **COUPE**, *n* - a closed two-door car.

COURTESY CAR, *n* - a vehicle sent by a hotel to pick up guests from an airport or station at no extra charge.

COVERALLS, *pl n* - overalls, a boiler suit.

COW, *n* (*col*) - in the expression **HAVE A COW**: to have kittens, have a canary.

COW-CATCHER, *n* - the triangular metal frame projecting from the front of a locomotive, serving to clear the track of obstructions.

COYOTE, *n* - a small, wolflike animal roaming the western deserts and prairies. Also called prairie wolf. Pronounced *ki-o-tay*.

CPA, *n* (*abbr*) - certified public account, the equivalent of a chartered accountant.

CRACK UP, *v* (*col*) - to laugh unrestrainedly or to cause to do so. *I crack up just thinking about those old jokes. They crack me up.*

CRACKER, *n* - a disparaging term for a poor or

CUBE SUGAR

uneducated white person of the rural South. A country bumpkin.

CRACKER-BARREL, *adj* - rural, rustic, homespun, especially with regard to **CRACKER-BARREL PHILOSOPHY**. After the cracker barrels around which people would allegedly gather for conversation in old-time general stores.

CRANBERRY, *n* - a red berry, used for making a jelly-like sauce without which no Thanksgiving dinner would be complete.

CRANKY, *adj* - not eccentric but irritable, bad-tempered, fussy.

CRAPS, *n* - a popular gambling game using two dice. To **SHOOT CRAPS** is to play this game.

CRAWFISH, *v* (*col*) - to walk sideways or, metaphorically, to withdraw from an undertaking.

CRAZY BONE, *n* (*col*) - funny bone.

CRAZY QUILT, *n* - patchwork quilt.

CREAM, *v* (*col*) - to defeat overwhelmingly.

CREAM OF WHEAT, *n* - semolina.

CREEK, *n* - a stream, often shallow or intermittent.

CRIB, *n* - a cot as well as a crib. Hence **CRIB DEATH** is cot death.

CRIMP, *n* (*col*) - 1. something which obstructs or hampers. 2. a dreary, boring person.

CRITTER, *n* (*col*) - a living creature. The pronunciation of this corruption of 'creature' would have been familiar to Shakespeare, since, in the 17th century, the suffix *-ture* still had not acquired its modern *ch* sound.

CROSSWALK, *n* - pedestrian crossing.

CROTCH, *n* - crutch, in the sense of the genital area.

CROW, *n* - humble pie, especially in the expression **EAT CROW**, to be forced to accept or do something humiliating.

CRUD, *n* (*col*) - a piece of sticky filth, especially when encrusted. The adjective is **CRUDDY**: nasty, repellent, worthless.

CRUISER, *n* - a police car. Also called a **PROWL CAR**, a **SQUAD CAR** or a **PATROL CAR**.

CRULLER, *n* - a small ring-shaped cake, fried in deep fat.

CUBE SUGAR, *n* - lump sugar.

CUFFS

CUFFS, *pl n* - turn-ups on trousers.

CUM LAUDE, *adv* - the lowest of three designations for above-average achievement in university final examinations, roughly the equivalent of a 2.2 in GB. The other distinctions are **MAGNA CUM LAUDE**, comparable to a 2.1, and **SUMMA CUM LAUDE**, comparable to a class 1. Latin: with praise.

CUPBOARD, *n* - a kitchen cupboard or larder. Any other cupboard is a **CLOSET**.

CURVE BALL, *n* - in baseball, a pitched ball which veers to one side in midair. Hence, the expression **THROW SOMEONE A CURVE BALL**, meaning to trick, mislead, deceive someone.

CUSS, *n (col)* - to curse or curse at.

CUSTOM-MADE, *adj* - made to measure.

CUT A FAT HOG, *v (col)* - to bite off more than one can chew.

CUT LOOSE, *v* - to go wild, to speak or act without restraint. *He cut loose with a string of hair-raising obscenities.*

CUT THE CHEESE, *v (col)* - to fart. *All right, own up - who cut the cheese?*

CUT UP, *v (col)* - to behave in a playful or boisterous way, to clown about. As a noun it means a joker or buffoon.

CUTESY, *adj (col)* - affectedly coy or excessively cute.

CYCLONE CELLAR OR STORM CELLAR, *n* - an underground shelter in or next to a house where refuge can be taken in severe windstorms.

D

DANDY, *adj* - very good, fine.

DAR, *n (abbr)* - Daughters of the American Revolution, a patriotic women's society.

DATE, *v* - to go out with someone on a date, or to be the boyfriend or girlfriend of someone of the opposite sex. On a **DOUBLE DATE**, two couples go out together.

DAVENPORT, *n* - a large sofa, often convertible

into a bed.

DAY BED, *n* - studio couch.

DAYLIGHT-SAVING TIME or (*abbr*) **DST**, *n* - time during which the clocks are put an hour ahead of standard time to have more daylight at the end of the working day in late spring, summer and early autumn.

DEADHEAD, *n (col)* - 1. an aircraft, bus, train or other vehicle that is transporting no passengers and carrying no goods during a trip. The word can also be used as a verb meaning to drive such an empty vehicle. 2. a person who gains free admittance to entertainment or who travels without paying. 3. a dull-witted, sluggish person.

DEBARK, *v* - another word for disembark.

DECAL, *n* - a transfer or sticker. Short for decalcomania.

DECK, *n* - a wooden platform, typically with low sides, adjacent to a house.

DEED, *v* - to convey or transfer property by deed.

DEN MOTHER, *n* - a woman who supervises a den (i.e. a pack) of Cub Scouts.

DENATURED ALCOHOL, *n* - methylated spirits.

DEPOT, *n* - another word for a bus or railway station.

DERBY, *n* - a bowler hat. Pronounced *durr-be*.

DESK CLERK, *n* - receptionist.

DETOUR, *n* - diversion.

DEVIL'S FOOD CAKE, *n* - a rich chocolate cake.

DIAL TONE, *n* - dialling tone.

DIAMONDBACK, *n* - a rattlesnake.

DIAPER, *n* - nappy.

DIBS, *pl n (col)* - a claim, rights, as in *I have dibs on the last piece of pie*. A juvenile term deriving from dibstones, counters used in a game.

DICK, *n (col)* - detective.

DICKER, *v* - to haggle, bargain.

DIME, *n* - a 10-cent piece.

DIMMERS, *pl n* - 1. dipped headlights on a road vehicle. 2. parking lights on a car. The **DIMMER SWITCH** is the dip switch.

DINER, *n* - a small, cheap restaurant with a long counter and booths, designed to look like the restaurant car on a train.

DINGBAT, *n (col)* - 1. an empty-headed, zany

DINGBAT

DIRECTIONAL

or silly person. 2. an object, such as a brick or stone, used as a missile.

DIRECTIONAL, *n* (*col*, *old*) - a car indicator.

DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE, *n* - see INFORMATION.

DIRIGIBLE, *n* - zeppelin.

DIRT FARMER, *n* (*col*) - a farmer who does all the work, often hard and unlucrative, on his property. Also, **DIRT FARMING**.

DIRTY POOL, *n* (*col*) - unfair or unethical behaviour, dirty tricks.

DISASSEMBLE, *v* - another word for dismantle.

DISCOMBOBULATE, *v* - to throw into a state of confusion, to disconcert.

DISH TOWEL, *n* - tea towel.

DISHPAN, *n* - flat-bottomed basin for washing up. According to advertisers, using the wrong washing-up liquid causes 'dishpan hands'.

DISHRAG, *n* - another word for dishcloth.

DISORIENTED, *adj* - disorientated.

DISTRICT, *n* - constituency. A congressional district is the equivalent of a parliamentary constituency.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY or **DA**, *n* - the public prosecutor of a judicial district.

DITCH, *v* (*col*) - to skip class, play truant.

DITSY, *adj* (*col*) - scatterbrained or inane.

DIVIDED HIGHWAY, *n* (*col*) - dual carriageway. Also known as a four lane highway or four lane.

DIXIE, *n* - the Southern states that joined the Confederacy during the Civil War. The name was popularized by the song *Dixie's Land* of 1859.

DOCENT, *n* - 1. a teacher at some universities, not a full-time faculty member. 2. a tour guide in a museum, cathedral, etc.

DOG, *n* (*col*) - 1. a hopelessly inferior product. *His book was a total dog.* 2. an unattractive or uninteresting woman.

DOG TAG, *n* - a military identity disc worn around the neck.

DOGGY BAG or **DOGGIE BAG**, *n* (*col*, *old*) - a bag provided by a restaurant for carrying away leftovers from a meal, supposedly for the customer's dog. The term is dying out and it is now common to ask for a box.

DOGIE, *n* - a stray or motherless calf. Pro-

DROPOUT

nounced *doe-gy*.

DOOHICKEY, *n* (*col*) - 1. a small mechanical device whose name is not known. 2. a pimple or blackhead.

DOOZY or **DOOZIE**, *n* - a person or thing which is extraordinary or bizarre.

DORMITORY, *n* - a hall of residence.

DOUBLE HEADER or **TWIN BILL**, *n* - two games played consecutively as part of the same programme, especially in baseball. Also used metaphorically.

DOUBLE TAKE, *n* - a delayed reaction to an unusual remark or circumstance. Commonly used as a comic device.

DOUBLE WHAMMY, *n* (*col*) - a dual disadvantage or a two-pronged difficulty. *The double whammy of high home prices and high interest rates.*

DOUBLE-CLUTCH, *v* - to double-declutch.

DOUGHBOY, *n* (*col*) - an infantryman, especially in the First World War.

DOUGHNUT, *n* - a ring-shaped pastry, quite different in taste and texture from a British doughnut.

DOWNER, *n* (*col*) - something depressing.

DOWNSPOUT, *n* - drainpipe.

DOWNTOWN, *n* - the central part of a town or city, especially the commercial area. Also used as adjective and adverb.

DRAFT, *n* - conscription.

DRAINBOARD, *n* - draining board

DRAPES, *pl n* - curtains of heavy fabric, as opposed to net or lace curtains (which are called curtains, sheer curtains or SHEERS).

DRAWERS, *pl n* - underpants.

DRESSER, *n* - a chest of drawers for storing clothes in a bedroom or dressing room, often with a mirror on top.

DRIVE TIME, *n* - the time of day when commuters drive to and from work. The best radio programs are broadcast during drive time.

DRIVER'S HANDBOOK, *n* - the Highway Code.

DRIVER'S LICENSE, *n* - driving licence.

DROP-DEAD GORGEOUS, *adj* (*col*) - very beautiful.

DROPOUT, *n* (*col*) - someone who drops out of school or university without finishing. Or, as in GB, who withdraws from society in

DRUGGIST

general.

DRUGGIST, *n* (*old*) - a pharmacist, licensed to dispense medicines in a **DRUGSTORE**.

DRUGSTORE, *n* - a shop where medical prescriptions are made up, like a chemist's, but also selling a wide variety of goods and with a counter where light meals are served.

DRUMMER, *n* (*col*) - a salesman, especially a commercial traveller.

DRY GOODS, *pl n* - textiles, clothing and related articles.

DUDE, *n* (*col*) - a city dweller, a dandy, a man unused to hard work, or simply a man, as in *He's a crude dude*.

DUDE RANCH, *n* - a ranch used as a holiday resort for city-dwellers, offering activities such as riding and camping.

DUDED UP, *adj* (*col*) - all dressed up.

DUDS, *pl n* (*col*) - clothes.

DUI, *n* (*abbr*) - another way to refer to drunk driving. Short for Driving Under the Influence.

DUMB, *adj* - stupid. Also, as in GB, mute.

DUMPSTER, *n* (*col*) - a skip. *The car had been parked for several weeks next to a trash dumpster*. Originally a trademark.

DUPLEX APARTMENT, *n* - a flat on two floors, connected by an inner staircase.

DUPLEX HOUSE, *n* - a semidetached house.

DUST BOWL, *n* - the area of the south central US, around Oklahoma, where the topsoil was destroyed by wind erosion during the droughts of the mid-1930s.

DUTCH DOOR, *n* - a stable door, i.e. a door divided in two horizontally.

DWEEB, *n* (*col*) - a moron, a simpleton.

DYKE OR DIKE, *n* (*col*) - a disparaging term for a lesbian.

E

EASTER STANDARD TIME OR EASTERN TIME OR (*abbr*) **EST**, *n* - standard time in the fifth

ENLISTED MAN

time zone west of Greenwich, five hours behind GMT. One of the four standard time zones in the US, covering the eastern part of the country.

EAT CROW, *v* - SEE **CROW**.

EAVES SPOUTS OR EAVES TROUGHS, *pl n* - other words for the gutters that run along the edge of a roof.

EDITORIAL, *n* - leading article in a newspaper.

EFFICIENCY APARTMENT OR EFFICIENCY, *n* - a one-room furnished flat with its own bathroom and kitchenette.

EGGPLANT, *n* - aubergine.

EIGHT BALL, *n* - in pool, the black ball marked with the number 8, which should be pocketed last. The expression **BEHIND THE EIGHT BALL** corresponds to GB snookered, in a difficult situation.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE, *n* - a body of electors chosen by the voters theoretically to elect the President and Vice President of the US. In practice, they follow the dictates of the voting public.

ELEVATED RAILWAY, *n* - an urban railway track built on supports above a city street.

ELEVATOR, *n* - a lift.

EMERGENCY BRAKE, *n* - the handbrake or parking brake of a car.

EMMY, *n* - television's equivalent of an Oscar, awarded annually for outstanding performances and production.

EMPIRE STATE, *n* - a nickname for New York state, bestowed by George Washington.

ENDIVE, *n* - chicory.

ENGINEER, *n* - also means a railroad engine-driver.

ENGLISH, *n* - side given to a ball in billiards or pool.

ENGLISH MUFFIN, *n* - A flat round muffin usually split and toasted before being eaten with butter and marmalade for breakfast.

ENJOIN, *v* - to forbid or prohibit from doing. This is the opposite of the GB meaning, to compel to do.

ENLISTED MAN OR (*abbr*) **EM**, *n* - any serviceman who is not an officer and not under training to become one. Also **ENLISTED WOMAN**, **ENLISTED PERSON**.

ERASER

ERASER, *n* - rubber. In the US, a RUBBER is a colloquial term for a condom.

ERECTOR SET, *n* - a children's toy, similar to Meccano.

ESTATE TAX, *pl n* - death duties.

ETHNIC, *n* - a member of a minority ethnic group, especially one who maintains the language and customs of the group.

EUROPEAN PLAN, *n* - a hotel rate covering room and service but not meals. Cf. AMERICAN PLAN.

EVERGLADES, *n* - a subtropical swampy region of southern Florida, noted for its tall grass, winding waterways, alligators, crocodiles and egrets.

EXPIRATION DATE, *n* - expiry date.

EXPLANATION POINT, *n* - exclamation mark.

EXPLORER, *n* - a dental probe.

EXPRESSWAY, *n* - motorway. See FREEWAY.

EYEBALL, *v (col)* - 1. to look over carefully, to scrutinize. 2. to estimate roughly by looking: *He eyeballed the area of the wall to be painted.*

F

FACILITY, *n* - something, often a building, created for a specific function: *hospitals and other health care facilities.*

FACULTY, *n* - all administrative and teaching staff at a school or university.

FAGGOT OR FAG, *n (col)* - a disparaging term for a male homosexual.

FAIRY, *n (col)* - a male homosexual.

FALL, *n* - another word for autumn.

FANNY, *n (col)* - the backside, the buttocks.

FAR-SIGHTED, *adj* - long-sighted.

FAT CAT, *n (col)* - 1. a very wealthy or influential person. 2. a wealthy person who is a heavy contributor to a political campaign. Also used as a modifier: *a fat-cat industrialist.*

FAUCET, *n* - a tap. In the US, for safety reasons, the cold-water faucet is always on the

FIRST LADY

right. Curiously, water from the faucet is called tap water.

FAVA BEAN, *n* - broad bean. Pronounced *fah-ve*.

FAVORITE SON, *n* - a man favoured for nomination as a Presidential candidate by delegates from his own state at a national political convention.

FEDORA, *n* - a trilby hat.

FEISTY, *adj* - 1. touchy, temperamental. 2. full of pluck or spirit.

FENDER, *n* - the wing or mudguard of a car or bicycle. A FENDER-BENDER is a car crash resulting in minor damage.

FERRIS WHEEL, *n* - the big wheel at a fair-ground.

FIELD GOAL, *n* - See TOUCHDOWN.

FIELD HOCKEY, *n* - hockey. Used by itself, hockey means ice hockey.

FIFTH, *n (col)* - a bottle of spirits containing one fifth of a gallon. *Marlowe opened the drawer of the desk and pulled out a fifth of bourbon.*

FIG NEWTON, *n* - a fig roll.

FIGURE, *v* - to think.

FILE CABINET, *n* - filing cabinet.

FILL OUT, *v* - (forms) to fill in.

FILLING STATION, *n* - petrol station.

FIN, *n (col, old)* - a five-dollar bill.

FINAGLE, *v (col)* - 1. to obtain by deceitful means. *He finagled a day off work.* 2. to cheat, swindle. *He finagled the old lady out of a fortune.* Pronounced *fi-nay-gel*.

FINK, *n (col)* - 1. a police informant. 2. a strike-breaker, blackleg. 3. a contemptible person. As a verb it means to inform on someone or to renege on a promise: *They said they would help us, but then finked out.*

FIRE DEPARTMENT, *n* - the fire brigade. A FIRE HOUSE is a fire station, A FIRE TRUCK a fire engine.

FIRE PLUG, *n (old)* - another word for fire hydrant.

FIRECRACKER, *n* - another word for firework, especially a banger.

FIRST FLOOR, *n* - the ground floor. GB first floor = US second floor, and so on.

FIRST LADY, *n* - the wife of the President of the

FISH STICKS

FRATERNITY

United States.

FISH STICKS, *pl n* - fish fingers.

FISH STORY, *n (col)* - an implausible, boastful story, e.g. of the one that got away.

FIVE-AND-TEN OF FIVE-AND-DIME OR DIME STORE, *n (old)* - a shop selling a wide variety of inexpensive articles. **DIMESTORE GLASSES** are reading glasses purchased without a prescription.

FIXINGS, *pl n* - 1. apparatus or equipment. 2. accompaniments for a dish; trimmings.

FLACK, *n (col)* - a press or publicity agent, a PR man. Also used as a verb meaning to publicize or promote: *Nowadays authors tour the country flacking their books.*

FLAKE, *n (col)* - 1. an erratic, unreliable person. 2. in baseball, a flamboyant individual. The adjective is **FLAKEY**. *You can't depend on a guy like that, he's too flakey.*

FLAP ONE'S GUMS, *v (col)* - to talk nonsense. *Quit flapping your gums and listen!*

FLAPJACK, *n* - another word for pancake.

FLASHLIGHT, *n* - torch. For an American, a torch is a portable light produced by a flame.

FLAT, *n* - a puncture.

FLATFOOT, *n (col)* - a policeman.

FLATWARE, *n* - cutlery. Also called **SILVERWARE**, regardless of the metal it is made of.

FLIER OR FLYER, *n* - 1. a circular or pamphlet for mass distribution. 2. a speculative business transaction.

FLIP, *v (col)* - 1. to go crazy. 2. to react strongly, especially with enthusiasm: *When she saw the new car, she flipped out.*

FLOAT, *n* - a carbonated soft drink with a scoop of ice cream in it.

FLOOR LAMP, *n* - standard lamp.

FLOORWALKER OR FLOOR MANAGER, *n* - shopwalker.

FLOPHOUSE, *n* - dosshouse

FLUB, *v (col)* - to botch, bungle. *He came repeatedly to the net but each time flubbed the volley.*

FLUNK, *n (col)* - to fail an examination or course, or to give a failing grade to a student.

FLUTIST, *n* - a variant of flautist.

FLY BALL, *n* - in baseball, a ball that is batted in a high arc, usually to the outfield. A **POP**

FLY OR POP-UP is a short high fly ball, which is easy to catch.

FLY BY THE SEAT OF ONE'S PANTS, *v (col)* - to improvise. *I have no idea what I'm going to tell them, I'll just fly by the seat of my pants, I guess.*

FLYBOY OR FLY-BOY, *n (col)* - a member of the airforce, especially a pilot.

FLYOVER, *n* - (aircraft) a fly-past.

FOGGY BOTTOM, *n* - the US Department of State. From the Department's location in an area of Washington, DC near the Potomac River.

FOLKS, *pl n* - one's relatives, in particular one's parents. *He's staying with his folks.* The colloquial expression **JUST FOLKS** means down-to-earth, open-hearted.

FOOD STAMP, *n* - a stamp or coupon which is issued by the government as a form of welfare payment and which can be used to purchase food in shops.

FOOTBALL, *n* - American football, not soccer.

FOOTLOCKER, *n* - a small locker for storing personal belongings, usually at the foot of a bed, e.g. in a barracks.

FORMULA, *n* - a liquid food for babies, containing most of the nutrients in human milk.

FORTY-NINER, *n* - a prospector who took part in the California gold rush of 1849.

FOUR HUNDRED, *n* - the most exclusive or affluent social clique in a particular community.

FOUR LANE HIGHWAY, *n* - see **DIVIDED HIGHWAY**.

FOUR-CYCLE ENGINE, *n* - four-stroke engine.

FOUR-FLUSHER, *n (col)* - a person who bluffs or makes empty claims. In poker, five cards are required to make a flush.

FOX, *n (col)* - a sexually attractive woman. The adjective is **FOXY**.

FRAG, *v (col)* - to kill or wound a detested superior officer deliberately. The word, though not the practice, originated in the Vietnam War, where fragmentation grenades were sometimes used to this end.

FRATERNITY, *n* - in US universities, a secret society, usually designated by a Greek letter, joined by male students and functioning as a social club.

FREEBIE

FREEBIE, *n* - any article or service given away free.

FREELoad, *v (col)* - to eat and drink at someone else's expense, taking advantage of their generosity. A **FREELoader** is a person who does this.

FREEWAY, *n* - motorway. Also called expressway, superhighway, or thruway. A freeway is specifically a highway without tolls.

FREIGHT CAR, *n* - goods wagon on a train.

FREIGHT ELEVATOR, *n* - a goods lift.

FRENCH FRIES, *pl n* - chips or French fried potatoes. Usually thinner, crisper and less greasy than British chips. US chips = GB crisps.

FRESH, *adj (col)* - cheeky, impudent, saucy.

FRESH OUT OF, *adv (col)* - having recently run out of supplies of something. *Sorry, we're fresh out of milk.*

FRESH PAINT, *n* - wet paint.

FRESHMAN, *n* - a first year undergraduate. A student in the second year at university is a **SOPHOMORE**, in the third year a **JUNIOR**, and in the fourth year a **SENIOR**.

FROG'S EGGS, *pl n* - frogspawn.

FRONT DESK, *n* - in a hotel, reception.

FRUIT BREAD, *n* - currant bread.

FRUIT CUP, *n* - fruit cocktail.

FULL-COURT PRESS, *n* - an all-out effort. *The Administration undertook a full-court press to secure congressional approval.* In basketball, it is the tactic of harrying the opposing team in all areas of the court.

FUNNIES, *pl n* - the comic strips in a newspaper.

FUNNY FARM, *n (col)* - a facetious term for a mental institution.

G

GABFEST, *n (col)* - a prolonged bout of conversation or gossip.

GALLON, *n* - 1 US gallon is equivalent to 0.83 imperial gallon or 3.79 litres.

GLORY HOLE

GARAGE SALE, *n* - a family-organised jumble sale, with items sold from the garage. Also called a **YARD SALE**.

GARBAGE, *n* - rubbish. A **GARBAGE CAN** is a dustbin. A **GARBAGE TRUCK** is a dustcart.

GARTER BELT, *n* - another name for a suspender belt. Suspenders are garters.

GAS MILEAGE, *n* - another term for the fuel consumption of a car.

GAS PEDAL, *n* - the accelerator.

GASOLINE OR GAS, *n* - petrol. Colloquially, the verb is to **GAS UP** a vehicle.

GAT, *n (col, old)* - a pistol or revolver.

GEARSHIFT, *n* - gear lever of a car.

GERMAN SHEPHERD, *n* - another name for an Alsatian dog. The term disappeared in GB during the First World War but continued to be used in the US.

GET OFF, *v (col)* - to have an orgasm, or, more generally, to experience great pleasure or gratification.

GET OUT OF HERE!, *interj (col)* - an expression of surprise or disbelief.

GET OUT OF SOMEONE'S FACE, *v (col)* - to leave someone alone. *Look, I have work to do, so get out of my face, will you.*

GET REAL, *v (col)* - to be serious, adopt a more realistic attitude. *One of these days you're going to have to get real and go out and look for a job.*

GIBSON GIRL, *n* - the fashionable American young woman of the 1890s, idealized in the drawings of Charles Dana Gibson.

GIMP, *n (col)* - a limp or a person who limps. Also used as a verb. The adjective is **GIMPY**.

GIRL SCOUT, *n* - Girl Guide

GISMO OR GIZMO, *n (col)* - a mechanical device or part whose name is unknown or forgotten, a gadget, a whatchamacallit.

GIVEN NAME, *n* - Christian name.

GLEE CLUB, *n* - a group of singers performing short pieces of choral music.

GLOP, *n (col)* - any soft, soggy mixture, e.g. *cafeterias serving nondescript glop*. Figuratively, sentimental slush.

GLORY HOLE, *n (col)* - a spare room or cupboard where miscellaneous objects are stored untidily.

GO-GO

GO-GO, *adj (col)* - dynamic, forceful, especially relating to discos and the music and dancing performed in them.

GOBBLEDYGOOK, *n* - unclear and pretentious language, full of jargon and obscure phraseology. Imitative of the gobbling of a turkey.

GODDAMNED OR GODDAMN OR GODDAM, *adj (col)* - damned, bloody.

GOFER, *n* - an employee whose duties include menial tasks such as running errands. Alteration of *go for*.

GOLDBRICK OR GOLDBRICKER, *n* - a person, especially a soldier, who shirks his work; an idler or loafer.

GONDOLA, *n* - a low open flat-bottomed railway goods wagon.

GOOF OR GOOF UP, *v (col)* - 1. to make a careless mistake. 2. to hurt oneself. *She goofed up her leg skiing.* To **GOOF OFF** is to shirk work, idle or waste time.

GOOFBALL, *n (col)* - 1. a fool or an eccentric. 2. a barbiturate or tranquilliser in pill form, especially when taken for non-medical reasons.

GOOK, *n (col)* - 1. a racist term for a person from a Far Eastern country. 2. a messy sticky substance.

GOON, *n* - a thug hired to intimidate, especially in an industrial dispute.

GOOSE BUMPS, *pl n* - another name for goose pimples.

GOOSE EGG, *n (col, old)* - 1. zero, written as a numeral and indicating that no points have been scored. Cf. GB duck or duck's egg. 2. a bump on the head.

GOP, *n (abbr)* - Grand Old Party, i.e. the Republican Party. Often depicted in cartoons as an elephant (while the Democrats are usually represented by a donkey).

GOTHAM, *n* - a nickname for New York City.

GRAB BAG, *n* - 1. a lucky dip. 2. *(col)* - a miscellaneous collection. *The discussion quickly turned into a grab bag of petty complaints.*

GRADE, *n* - 1. a group of pupils of similar age or ability taught together at school. Americans start their formal education at the age

of six in the 1st grade and finish twelve years later in the 12th grade. 2. a military rank.

GRADE CROSSING, *n* - level crossing.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE or *(abbr)* **GPA**, *n* - a student's overall average in examinations. If a student gets a failing grade (i.e. fails an examination), then his GPA may be too low to proceed to the next grade, in which case he usually has to repeat the year.

GRADE SCHOOL, *n* - primary school.

GRAFT, *n* - Corruption in public office; money or other advantages gained by unscrupulous means.

GRAHAM CRACKER, *n* - a slightly sweet, usually rectangular, wholemeal biscuit. Similar to a digestive biscuit.

GRAND JURY, *n* - a jury of between 12 and 23 people whose function is to examine accusations of crime and decide whether there is sufficient evidence to warrant an indictment.

GRANDSTAND, *v* - to behave ostentatiously in an attempt to impress an audience. To **MAKE A GRANDSTAND PLAY** means the same.

GRAVEYARD SHIFT, *n* - night shift.

GREASE MONKEY, *n (col)* - a car mechanic.

GREASER, *n (col)* - a derogatory term for a Mexican or other Latin American.

GREASEWOOD OR GREASEBUSH, *n* - a spiny Western shrub that yields an oil used as a fuel.

GREEN CARD, *n* - a government document allowing aliens to work legally in the US.

GREEN MOUNTAIN STATE, *n* - Vermont.

GREEN THUMBS, *pl n* - green fingers.

GREENBACK, *n (col)* - a note of US currency, particularly a dollar bill.

GRIDIRON, *n* - the field of play in American football and hence an informal name for the game itself. Often used as a modifier, e.g. *a gridiron hero*, *a weekend of gridiron thrills*.

GRIDLOCK, *n* - a traffic jam extending in all directions within a grid of streets. Metaphorically, a complete lack of movement or progress. Also used as a verb.

GRIFFER, *n (col)* - a con man, a swindler.

GRIND, *n (col)* - a person, especially a student, who works excessively hard.

GRIND

GRIND

GRIND, *v (col)* - to dance erotically by rotating the pelvis, especially in the expression bump and grind.

GRIP, *n* - a suitcase.

GRIPPE, *n* - another name for influenza.

GRITS or **HOMINY GRITS**, *pl n* - coarsely ground maize, prepared as a breakfast food or side dish, especially in the South, by boiling in milk or water.

GROSS, *adj* - disgusting, repellent. *I'm not eating that slop, it looks totally gross.* Colloquially, to **GROSS OUT** is to disgust, especially with obscene language or behaviour. *The way they act really grosses me out.*

GROUND, *n, v & adj* - (electricity) earth.

GROUND MEAT, *n* - minced meat.

GROUNDHOG DAY, *n* - 2nd February, the day on which the groundhog, a species of marmot, is supposed to emerge from hibernation. If, venturing forth, the groundhog sees its shadow, it allegedly returns to its burrow, signifying six more weeks of winter.

GRUBS, *pl n (col)* - old clothes, especially cut-off jeans.

GRUNT, *n (col)* - 1. an infantry soldier or US marine, especially in the Vietnam War. 2. a person who performs routine or mundane tasks, a dogsbody.

GUARD RAIL, *n* - a crash barrier.

GUBERNATORIAL, *adj* - relating to a state governor or his activities.

GUESS, *v* - to suppose. 'I guess' means 'I suppose so'.

GUINEA, *n (col)* - a racist term for an Italian or person of Italian descent.

GUMBO, *n* - another name for okra. Also, a soup or stew thickened with okra pods.

GUMSHOE, *n (col)* - a person who moves about stealthily, especially a detective.

GURNEY, *n* - a metal stretcher with wheeled legs, used for transporting patients.

GUSSY UP, *v (col)* - to dress or decorate elaborately. *She gussied herself up in sequins and feathers.*

GYP, *n & v* - cheat, swindle. Pronounced *jip*.

HASH OVER

H

HABERDASHER, *n* - a men's outfitter.

HACK IT, *v (col)* - to cope or deal with a difficult situation.

HAIRPIN CURVE or **HAIRPIN TURN**, *n* - a hairpin bend.

HAIRY, *adj (col)* - dangerous, frightening or fraught with difficulties.

HALF GLASSES, *pl n* - half moon glasses.

HALF-AND-HALF, *n* - 1. a dairy mixture of half cream and half milk, used in coffee and baking. 2. a whorehouse mixture of fellation and copulation.

HAMBURGER BUN, *n* - a bap.

HAMBURGER MEAT, *n* - minced meat. Also known as **GROUND MEAT**.

HAND, *n* - a worker on a farm or ranch.

HANDBALL, *n* - a game played by hitting a small, hard ball against a wall or walls. Similar in scoring to volleyball.

HANDOUT, *n (col)* - food, money or other charitable donations, especially with the implication that the recipient is undeserving. *They're just a bunch of bums living on food stamps and other bleeding heart handouts.*

HANG A RIGHT (LEFT), *v (col)* - to turn right (left), as in Hang a right at the traffic lights. Synonymous with **MAKE A RIGHT (LEFT)**.

HANG IN THERE, *v (col)* - to persevere, to stick it out.

HANG LOOSE, *v (col)* - to relax, loosen up.

HARD-SHELL, *adj (col)* - strictly orthodox, uncompromising, e.g. *a hard-shell Baptist*.

HARDCOVER, *adj & n* - another name for a hardback book.

HARDHAT or **HARD-HAT**, *n (col)* - 1. a construction worker. 2. an ultraconservative manual worker with unquestioningly patriotic and reactionary views.

HARDWARE DEALER, *n* - an ironmonger. His place of business is a **HARDWARE STORE**.

HASH BROWNS, *pl n* - shredded or diced potatoes fried until brown.

HASH HOUSE, *n* - a cheap restaurant. A **HASH SLINGER** serves food in one.

HASH OVER, *v (col)* - to discuss or review some-

HASSLE

thing carefully: *They hashed over their plans for the move.*

HASSLE, *n* - 1. trouble, a nuisance. 2. a wrangle or row. Used also as a verb, meaning to argue or to harass. The noun hassle was first recorded in 1945. Possibly a combination of harass and tussle.

HAT-CHECK GIRL, *n* - a female cloakroom attendant.

HAYRIDE, *n* - a ride taken for amusement, e.g. by a picnic party, in a wagon filled with hay.

HAYSEED, *n (col)* - a yokel, country bumpkin.

HAZE, *v* - to persecute or play rough practical jokes on a newcomer.

HEAD, *n (col)* - 1. the toilet. 2. a habitual drug user. 3. oral sex, as in the expression *GIVE HEAD*. *I remember you well in the Chelsea Hotel, Giving me head on the unmade bed (L. Cohen).*

HEATER, *n* - electric fire.

HEAVY, *adj (col)* - of great significance or profundity. *They sat up half the night talking heavy, heavy politics.*

HEEL, *n* - 1. the end of a loaf of bread, i.e. the crust. 2. *(col)* - a contemptible person. *I really didn't mean to land her in trouble like that, I feel like such a heel.*

HEIST, *n (col)* - a robbery or burglary. Used as a verb, it means to steal or rob.

HELL'S KITCHEN, *n* - a district with a reputation for crime and violence.

HELP, *n* - a farm worker or domestic servant, or such employees considered as a group. Often used with *the*: *The help will take care of it.*

HERO SANDWICH, *n* - half a French loaf slit lengthwise and copiously filled. Also known as a **HOAGY**.

HEX, *n* - an evil spell or a witch. Used as a verb, it means to cast an evil spell, to bewitch.

HICK, *n (col)* - a gullible, unsophisticated, provincial person; the opposite of a city slicker. Sometimes used as a modifier, e.g. *a hick town*.

HICKEY, *n (col)* - the mark left by a love bite.

HIGH BEAM HEADLIGHTS, *pl n* - main beam headlights.

HIGH GEAR, *n* - top gear.

HIGH HAT, *n (col)* - another name for a top hat. Colloquially, to **HIGH-HAT** someone means to treat them condescendingly or in a supercilious way, as does the expression **GIVE SOMEONE THE HIGH HAT**.

HIGH ROLLER, *n (col)* - A person who spends extravagantly or who gambles for high stakes. Roller refers to rolling dice in a crap game.

HIGH SCHOOL, *n* - upper secondary school, roughly covering the ages 14 to 18.

HIGHBALL, *n* - a long iced drink consisting of whisky and soda or ginger ale.

HIGHBOY, *n* - a high chest of drawers, a tallboy. **HIGHTAIL** OR **HIGHTAIL IT**, *v (col)* - to go somewhere in a great hurry.

HIT, *v (col)* - to murder in fulfilment of an underworld contract. A **HITMAN**, or hired assassin, carries out such a hit.

HO-HUM, *adj (col)* - boring, dull, banal. *He was a ho-hum speaker, unable to catch the attention of his audience.*

HOB, *n* - a tramp.

HOCK, *v (col)* - to pawn. As a noun it can mean either the state of being pawned (*we put the jewellery in hock*) or the state of being in debt (*it took us years to get out of hock*).

HOCKEY, *n* - ice hockey. See **FIELD HOCKEY**.

HOG, *n (col)* - in the expression **HIGH ON THE HOG**, in a lavish or extravagant manner. Compare the Irish expression 'on the pig's back'. *He's been living high on the hog since he got his inheritance.*

HOGTIE, *v* - to tie the legs of an animal together. Figuratively, to impede, hamper, fetter.

HOLLER, *v* - to yell or shout.

HOME FREE, *adj* - home and dry.

HOME RUN OR **HOMER**, *n* - in baseball, a hit that allows the batter to make a complete circuit of the bases to score a run.

HOMELY, *adj* - unattractive, plain or ugly. The GB meaning - warm in manner or appearance - is never understood.

HOMEMAKER, *n* - housewife. A word introduced and spread by women's magazines.

HOMINY GRITS, *pl n* - see **GRITS**.

HONCHO

HYPHENATED NAME

HONCHO, *n (col)* - the person in charge, a manager or boss.

HONKY, *n (col)* - a common black American term for a white person, used disparagingly.

HONOR SYSTEM, *n* - a set of procedures whereby students or prisoners are trusted to act without direct supervision.

HOCH OR HOOTCH, *n (col)* - alcoholic drink, especially illicitly distilled spirits.

HOOD, *n* - the bonnet of a car. 2. *(col)* a gangster, shortened from hoodlum.

HOOF AND MOUTH DISEASE, *n* - foot and mouth disease.

HOOFER, *n (col, old)* - a professional dancer.

HOOKY OR HOOKEY, *n (col)* - truancy from school. The verb is to **PLAY HOOKY**.

HOOSEGOW, *n (col)* - a jail. From the Spanish *juzgado*.

HOOSIER, *adj* - nickname for a native or resident of Indiana. Origin unknown.

HOOTCHY-KOOTCHY, *n (col)* - a deliberately sensual belly dance, performed as part of a carnival.

HOP, *v (col)* - to travel by means of an airplane, bus, etc. *He hopped a train to Chicago.*

HOPE CHEST, *n* - a bottom drawer. More specifically, a chest used by a young woman to store clothing and household goods in anticipation of marriage.

HORATIO ALGER, *n* - American author of inspiring rags-to-riches adventure books, e.g. *Ragged Dick* (1867).

HORNY, *adj (col)* - randy, sexually aroused.

HORSE TRAILER, *n* - horse box.

HOSE, *n* - another word for stockings.

HOSTLER, *n* - another word for ostler.

HOT FLASH, *n* - hot flush.

HOTFOOT, *n* - the practical joke of surreptitiously inserting a match between the sole and upper of a person's shoe and lighting it. As a verb, it means to hurry. *I've got to hotfoot it down to the bank before it closes.*

HOTS, *n (col)* - sexual attraction or desire, in the expression **HAVE THE HOTS FOR**. *She certainly seems to have the hots for him.*

HOUSE-BROKEN, *adj* - house-trained.

HOUSEMOTHER, *n* - a supervisor or house-

keeper in a women's hall of residence.

HOUSEWARES, *pl n* - cooking utensils, dishes, and other small articles used in a household, especially in the kitchen.

HOUSING PROJECT, *n* - a housing estate, a housing development. Often shortened to **PROJECT**.

HUCKLEBERRY, *n* - a wild fruit related to the blueberry.

HUCKSTER, *n* - a person who uses aggressive or showy methods to sell a product. Used ironically of television and radio advertising copywriters.

HUDDLE, *n* - in American football, a brief gathering of the team behind the line of scrimmage to receive instructions for the next play. Metaphorically, any secret planning conference.

HUNDREDWEIGHT, *n* - 100 pounds, not 112.

HUNG JURY, *n* - a jury that is divided and so unable to render a unanimous verdict.

HUNK, *n (col)* - a sexually attractive man with a muscular physique.

HUNKY, *n (col)* - a derogatory term for an immigrant from east-central Europe.

HUNKY-DORY, *adj (col)* - perfectly satisfactory, fine.

HURDY GURDY, *n (col)* - barrel organ.

HUSH PUPPY, *n (col)* - a small, slightly oblong, deep fried cornmeal cake. Perhaps from the fact that they were originally fed to the dogs to keep them quiet.

HUSTLE, *v (col)* - to obtain something by deceitful, aggressive or illicit means, or (of a pimp or prostitute) to solicit customers. The noun is **HUSTLER**, often a con man or a prostitute, male or female.

HUTCH, *n* - a Welsh dresser.

HYPE, *n (col)* - excessive publicity and the ensuing commotion, or exaggerated claims in advertising. As a verb: to promote by extravagant claims. *When all the hype dies down, we'll be able to decide whether it's a good movie or not.*

HYPHENATED NAME, *n* - double-barrelled name.

I

ICEBERG LETTUCE, *n* - a type of lettuce with very crisp pale leaves tightly enfolded.

ICEBOX, *n* (col, old) - another word for refrigerator.

IFFY, *adj* (col) - doubtful, uncertain. *Your plan sounds a little iffy to me.*

IN BACK OF, *prep* - behind. *Park your car in back of the store.*

INCORPORATED or (*abbr*) **INC.**, *adj* - the equivalent of limited, as in a limited company. The abbreviated form after a company's name is the equivalent of Ltd. See **CORPORATION**.

INDEPENDENCE DAY, *n* - 4th July, a public holiday commemorating the adoption in 1776 of the Declaration of Independence, celebrated with picnics and fireworks.

INDIAN GIVER, *n* (col) - a person who gives something and then demands the return of the gift.

INFORMATION, *n* - directory inquiries, on the telephone. Also called **DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE**.

INSEAM, *n* - inside leg.

INSTALLMENT PLAN, *n* - hire-purchase.

INSTRUCTOR, *n* - a junior university teacher.

INTERN, *n* - approximately the same as a houseman in a hospital. Used as a verb, it means to serve or train as an intern. In both cases, pronounced with the stress on the first syllable.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE or (*abbr*) **IRS**, *n* - equivalent of the Inland Revenue.

INTRAMURAL, *adj* - operating within a single establishment, especially a school or university, e.g. intramural athletics.

IV, *n* (*abbr*) - a drip. Short for intravenous.

IVY LEAGUE, *n* - eight major universities with similar academic and social status to Oxford and Cambridge in GB. They include Harvard, Yale and Princeton. So called because of the ivy that covers the older buildings.

J

JACK, *n* (col) - money.

JACK OFF, *v* (col) - to masturbate. A variant of **JERK OFF**.

JACKASS, *n* - a male donkey. Colloquially, a stupid or foolish person.

JACKHAMMER, *n* - pneumatic drill.

JACKLIGHT, *n* - a portable light used as a lure at night in hunting and fishing.

JACKRABBIT or **JACK RABBIT**, *n* - a large hare found in the West. As a verb, it means to move suddenly and rapidly: *A rear tire blew out and the car jackrabbited out of control* (S. Kleinfeld).

JAG, *n* (col) - 1. a bout of drinking or drug use. 2. a loss of self-control or lack of restraint in some activity, e.g. *a shopping jag*, *a crying jag*.

JAM, *n* - a preserve made of whole fruit boiled to a pulp with sugar. GB jam = US jelly.

JANITOR, *n* - caretaker.

JAVA, *n* (col) - brewed coffee.

JAWBONE, *n* - to urge compliance with official policy.

JAZZED, *adj* (col) - alert, energetic, keen.

JELLO or **JELL-O**, *n* - jelly. Jell-O is a brand name which has become a generic word. US jelly = GB jam.

JELLY, *n* - jam.

JELLY ROLL, *n* (col) - Swiss roll.

JERK, *n* (col) - a person regarded with contempt, especially a stupid or unpleasant person.

JERK AROUND, *v* (col) - to idle about or play casually: *When are you kids going to stop jerking around and do some work?*

JERK OFF, *v* (col) - to masturbate.

JERKWATER, *adj* (col) - inferior and insignificant, used mainly about places: *some jerkwater town*.

JIGABOO, *n* (col) - a racist word for a black.

JIM CROW, *n* (col) - originally referring to a black person, the term now means systematic discrimination against black people, as in *Jim Crow laws*, *a Jim Crow town*, etc. The term **CROW JIM** also exists, designat-

JIMMY

LAME DUCK

ing strong antiwhite prejudice among blacks.

JIMMY, *n* - jemmy.

JOB ACTION, *n* - industrial action.

JOCK, *n* (*col*) - an athlete, especially at university, or a macho male. The term derives from jockstrap.

JOCKEY SHORTS, *pl n* - see **SHORTS**.

JOE BLOW, *n* (*col*) - Joe Soap, Joe Bloggs.

JOHN, *n* (*col*) - 1. the toilet, the loo. 2. a prostitute's trick.

JOHN DOE, *n* - used as a name in legal proceedings to refer to an unidentified or unknown man or boy. The female equivalent is **JANE DOE**.

JOHN HANCOCK, *n* (*col*) - signature. Derives from the fact that Hancock was the first of the Revolutionary leaders to sign the Declaration of Independence.

JOSH, *v* - to tease someone good-humouredly, to joke.

JUMP ROPE, *n* - a skipping rope. Used as a verb, it means to skip.

JUMPER, *n* - pinafore dress. GB jumper = US sweater, pullover.

JUMPER CABLES, *pl n* - jump leads.

JUNE BUG or **JUNE BEETLE**, *n* - a large brown scarabaeid beetle, appearing in late spring.

JUNGLE GYM, *n* - a climbing frame for young children to play on. Originally a trademark.

JUNIOR, *n* - a student in the third year of a US high school or college. See **FRESHMAN**.

JUNIOR COLLEGE, *n* - an educational institution offering a two-year course which is the equivalent of the first two years of a four-year undergraduate course.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, *n* - an official similar to a British JP, but who can also perform marriages.

K

KEISTER, *n* (*col, old*) - backside. *I've had it up to my keister with these leaks* (Ronald

Reagan).

KEROSENE, *n* - paraffin, paraffin oil. US paraffin = GB paraffin wax.

KEWPIE or **KEWPIE DOLL**, *n* - a celluloid doll with rosy cheeks, wide eyes, and a curl of hair on its head. Originally a trademark, now generic. Pronounced *kyoo-pee*.

KIBBLE, *n* - pet food in the form of meal coarsely ground into pellets.

KIBITZ or **KIBBITZ**, *v* (*col*) - to look on and offer unwanted advice to others, e.g. to a chess player. A **KIBITZER** is a person who gives intrusive advice.

KICKBACK, *n* (*col*) - money given to someone illegally or unethically, usually as the result of a secret agreement.

KIKE, *n* (*col*) - a racist name for a Jew.

KITCHEN CABINET, *n* - a group of unofficial advisers to the President, chosen on a personal basis.

KLONDIKE BAR, *n* - a choc-ice.

KLUTZ, *n* (*col*) - a clumsy person. The adjective is **KLUTZY**.

KNEE PANTS, *pl n* - short trousers.

KNICKERS, *pl n* - a variant of knickerbockers, plus fours.

KNOCK UP, *v* (*col*) - to make pregnant, put in the family way.

KOOKY, *adj* (*col*) - bizarre, eccentric, nutty.

KVETCH, *v* (*col*) - to complain persistently and whiningly. As a noun, it means a chronic, whining complainer.

L

LABOR DAY, *n* - the first Monday in September, observed as a holiday in honour of working people, and unofficially marking the end of summer, especially in holiday resorts.

LABOR UNION, *n* - trade union.

LADYBUG, *n* - ladybird.

LAME DUCK, *n* - in politics, an elected official whose term of office is due to end shortly,

LATEX PAINT

LOSE IT

or who, for other reasons, has lost authority or become ineffectual. Also used as a modifier, e.g. *a lame-duck president*.

LATEX PAINT, *n* - emulsion paint.

LAUNDROMAT, *n* - launderette. Both words are trademarks.

LAY SCRATCH, *v* (*col*) - to accelerate a car quickly, thereby leaving a skid mark.

LAYER CAKE, *n* - a sandwich cake.

LAYOVER, *n* - stopover.

LAZY SUSAN, *n* - a revolving tray for condiments or food.

LEAD FOOT, *n* (*col*) - a tendency to drive fast. *He thinks he's a great driver because he has a lead foot.*

LEADER, *n* - an article offered at a sufficiently low price to attract customers. A **LOSS LEADER** is one sold below cost, in the hope that people who buy it will buy other goods as well.

LEATHERNECK, *n* (*col*) - a member of the US Marine Corps. A term more often read than heard.

LEFT FIELD, *n* (*col*) - in the expression **OUT IN LEFT FIELD**: weirdly unconventional, very unorthodox and wrong. Originally a baseball term.

LEG IT, *v* (*col*) - to walk. *The battery's dead, we're going to have to leg it.*

LEGAL HOLIDAY, *n* - a bank holiday.

LEMON, *n* (*col*) - something that proves to be unsatisfactory or defective, especially a car. *A dud. Did you actually pay money for this lemon?*

LETTER, *n* - the initial of a university on a sweater, awarded for outstanding performance in sports. A **LETTER JACKET** is a kind of windcheater bearing the initial or initials of a school or university.

LEVEE, *n* - an embankment alongside a river, either natural or manmade to prevent flooding.

LEVERAGE, *n* - gearing, i.e. the ratio of a company's debt capital to its equity capital.

LIABILITY INSURANCE, *n* - third party insurance.

LICENSE PLATE, *n* - the numberplate on a car.

LIFE PRESERVER, *n* - a life belt or life jacket.

LIGHTNING BUG, *n* - a glow worm or firefly.

LIMA BEAN, *n* - a common vegetable resem-

bling a broad bean. Also known as butter bean.

LIMEY, *n* (*col*) - an English person. From the use of lime juice on British warships to prevent scurvy.

LINE, *n* - queue. The verb is to **LINE UP** or to **STAND IN LINE**. *About 200 people were standing in line at the box-office.*

LINE-UP, *n* - an identity parade.

LINKS, *pl n* - breakfast sausages.

LIQUOR, *n* - any alcoholic drink, especially spirits.

LIQUOR STORE, *n* - an off-licence. Also called a package store.

LITTLE DIPPER, *n* - the constellation Ursa Minor.

LIVERWURST, *n* - liver sausage.

LOADED, *adj* (*col*) - drunk or drugged. Also, as in GB, wealthy.

LOAFER, *n* - a moccasin-like shoe for casual wear.

LOAN, *v* - to lend. Not considered incorrect.

LOCAL, *n* - not a pub, but the local branch of a trade union.

LOCATE, *v* - to become established, to settle. *Where do you intend to locate?*

LOCO, *adj* (*col*) - crazy. A Spanish word.

LOCOWEED or **CRAZYWEED**, *n* - a plant found in the Southwest that, when eaten by livestock, causes severe poisoning and brain disease.

LOFT, *n* - the upper storey of a warehouse or factory, or such an area converted into an apartment or artist's studio.

LOGE, *n* - the front rows of the dress circle in a theatre.

LOGROLLING, *n* - the practice of undemocratic agreements between politicians, involving mutual favours, the trading of votes, etc. From the early American practice of neighbours gathering to help clear each other's land by felling trees and rolling off the logs to be burned. Also, **LOGROLLER**.

LONE STAR STATE, *n* - Texas.

LONG-DISTANCE, *n* - used as a modifier, *a long-distance call*: a trunk call.

LONGSHOREMAN, *n* - a docker, dock worker.

LOSE IT, *v* (*col*) - 1. to throw up, vomit. 2. to go

LOT

MAVERICK

crazy. *He's started talking to the furniture, that's why I think he's losing it.*

LOT, *n* - a plot of land, often one used for a specific purpose, e.g. *a parking lot, a film lot.*

LOUNGE SUIT, *n* - not the customary suit of matching jacket and trousers worn by business men, but a woman's pyjama-type suit, suitable for relaxing and lounging about in.

LOW BEAM HEADLIGHTS, *pl n* - dipped headlights.

LOWBOY, *n* - a low table-like chest of drawers.

LOX, *n* - smoked salmon. The word is of Yiddish origin.

LUCK OUT, *v (col)* - to get lucky, have a stroke of luck.

LUG NUT, *n* - a wheel nut.

LULU, *n (col)* - an outstanding person, object or idea, something extraordinary.

LUMBER, *n* - timber.

LUMPS, *pl n (col)* - punishment, defeat or reverses. *He took his lumps.*

LUNCH PAIL, *n* - lunchbox.

LUNKHEAD, *n (col)* - a stupid person.

LUSH, *n (col)* - a drunkard.

LYE, *n* - caustic soda.

M

MACE, *n* - an aerosol causing tears and nausea, used to immobilize an assailant temporarily. Used also in riot control, like CS gas. A trade name which has become a generic word.

MAD MONEY, *n (col)* - a small sum of money kept for unlikely contingencies, specifically by a girl when she goes out on a date, in case she gets mad at her companion and has to make her own way home.

MADISON AVENUE, *n* - a New York street that is home to advertising and public relations agencies, and has come to symbolize their attitudes and practices.

MAGNA CUM LAUDE, *adv* - see **CUM LAUDE**.

MAID OF HONOR, *n* - bridesmaid.

MAILMAN, *n* - another name for postman. A mailbox is both the US equivalent of a pillar box and the box outside the home where letters are delivered.

MAIN STREET, *n* - equivalent of High Street. The term also stands for the inhabitants of small-town America considered as a group.

MAÎTRE D., *n* - a common term for head waiter. Short for *maître d'hôtel* and pronounced *may-tre dee*.

MAJOR, *n* - a university student's principal field of study. *Her major is psychology.* Sometimes used of the student: *She's a psychology major.* And often as a verb: *He's majoring in history.*

MAKE, *v (col)* - 1. to achieve the rank of, as in *He made captain.* 2. to seduce.

MAKE OUT, *v (col)* - to engage in snogging or petting, or to succeed sexually.

MAKE OVER, *v* - to redo, do up, renovate. Also to change, as in the song: *Why must you always try to make me over? / Take me as I am or let me go.*

MANHATTAN, *n* - a cocktail consisting of four parts rye whisky, one part sweet vermouth and a dash of bitters.

MANIFEST DESTINY, *n* - especially in the 19th century, the belief that the US was a chosen land and had the right and duty to govern the whole continent of North America.

MARKET, *n* - to shop for household supplies, as in *We marketed for a special Sunday dinner.*

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY, *n* - a public holiday occurring on the third Monday in January.

MASON-DIXON LINE, *n* - the boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland, regarded as the division between free states and slave states before the Civil War.

MASONITE, *n* - a type of fibreboard used for insulation, partitions, etc. Originally a trade name.

MAT, *n* - (around a picture) mount.

MATH, *n* - maths.

MATRON OF HONOR, *n* - similar to a bridesmaid but married.

MAVERICK, *n* - an unbranded cow that has wandered away from the herd. By extension, a

MAZUMA

person who is independent in thought and action.

MAZUMA, *n* (*col*) - money.

MD, *n* (*abbr*) - medical doctor, a term as common as GP in Britain.

MEAN, *adj* - 1. selfish, spiteful, malicious, and generally nasty. But not specifically stingy. 2. (*col*) excellent, skillful: *He sure plays a mean game of golf.*

MECHANICAL PENCIL, *n* - propelling pencil.

MEDAL OF HONOR, *n* - the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award for bravery.

MEDIAN STRIP, *n* - central reserve.

MEDICARE, *n* - a programme whereby the US Social Security Administration reimburses hospitals and doctors for medical care provided to citizens over 65 years of age.

MEMORIAL DAY, *n* - 30th May, a public holiday observed in commemoration of members of the armed forces killed in war. Formerly known as Decoration Day. It marks the unofficial beginning of summer.

MESA, *n* - a high plateau with steep edges, common in the Southwest. From Spanish *mesa*, table.

METERED MAIL, *n* - franked mail.

MEXICAN STANDOFF, *n* - a stalemate, deadlock, impasse.

MEZZANINE, *n* - dress circle in a theatre or cinema.

MILK CAN, *n* - a milk churn.

MILQUETOAST, *n* (*old*) - a meek, mild-mannered, weak or submissive person, a wimp. From a comic-strip character, whose name is an unadventurous combination of milk and toast.

MINOR, *n* - a university student's secondary subject. See **MAJOR**.

MINT JULEP, *n* - a long frosted drink made with bourbon, or sometimes brandy or rum, crushed ice, sugar and sprigs of mint.

MITT, *n* - a large padded leather glove worn by the catcher in baseball.

MIXOLOGY, *n* - the study or skill of mixing cocktails. A **MIXOLOGIST** is a bartender.

MOB, *n* - organized crime, the Mafia.

MOBILE HOME, *n* - a trailer, much larger than a

MOUNTAIN STANDARD TIME

caravan, that can be moved from one site to another and installed for relatively long periods. Also called a manufactured home.

MOCKINGBIRD, *n* - a native American bird noted for its ability to mimic the song of other birds.

MOLASSES, *n* - black treacle.

MOM, *n* - mum.

MOMENTARILY, *adv* - very soon, in a moment.

The manager is busy right now but he'll be with you momentarily. This usage, common in everyday speech, is considered unacceptable by many critics.

MONDAY MORNING QUARTERBACK, *n* (*col*) - a person who is wise after the event (who criticizes, passes judgement and generally declares how the weekend's game should have been played).

MONEY MARKET ACCOUNT, *n* - a high interest account.

MONKEY, *n* (*col*) - 1. an addict's dependence on a drug, especially in the expression **HAVE A MONKEY ON ONE'S BACK**. 2. slang for \$500.

MONKEY WRENCH, *n* - an adjustable spanner. Colloquially, to **THROW A MONKEY WRENCH INTO SOMETHING** is to throw a spanner in the works.

MONONUCLEOSIS, *n* - glandular fever. Often shortened to **MONO**.

MOOLAH, *n* (*col*) - money.

MOOSE, *n* - an elk.

MOPBOARD, *n* - skirting board. Also known as **BASEBOARD**.

MORTICIAN, *n* - undertaker.

MOSEY, *v* (*col*) - to walk in a leisurely manner, stroll, amble.

MOSSBACK, *n* - an old turtle or shellfish that has a growth of algae on its back. Figuratively, an extremely old-fashioned or conservative person.

MOTHER, *n* (*col*) - short for motherfucker. 1. a person or thing that is unpleasant or exasperating. 2. anything big or imposing.

MOTORBIKE, *n* (*col*) - a moped.

MOTORMAN, *n* - the driver of an electric train or tram.

MOUNTAIN STANDARD TIME or **MOUNTAIN TIME** or (*abbr*) **MST**, *n* - standard time in the 7th time

MOUTH OFF

NOSH

zone west of Greenwich, used in the Rocky Mountain states.

MOUTH OFF, *v (col)* - to talk disrespectfully or insolently. *I don't understand parents who let their kids mouth off to them like that.*

MOVIE THEATER or **MOVIE HOUSE**, *n* - a cinema.

MOXIE, *n (col)* - spunk, aggressive energy, initiative.

MR. CHARLIE or **MISTER CHARLIE**, *n (col)* - a black term for a white man or white people considered as a group.

MUFFLER, *n* - silencer on a car.

MUG SHOT, *n (col)* - a photograph of a person's face, especially one taken for police files.

MUGWUMP, *n* - a person who acts independently or remains neutral, especially in politics.

MULESKINNER, *n (col)* - muleteer, mule driver.

MULLIGAN STEW, *n* - Irish stew.

MURPHY BED, *n* - a bed that folds into a cupboard when not in use. Named after its inventor.

MUSKEG, *n* - an undrained swampy area.

MUSS, *v (col)* - to make untidy, rumple.

MUSTARD, *n (col)* - in the expression **NOT CUT THE MUSTARD**: to be unable to achieve or finish something. *Round here, those who don't cut the mustard just don't survive.*

MUTT, *n (col)* - a mongrel dog, cur.

MUTUAL FUND, *n* - unit trust.

N

NAIL THE BRAKES, *v (col)* - to apply the brakes of a car suddenly. *Seeing the child run towards the road, he nailed the brakes.*

NAPKIN, *n* - a serviette.

NARC or **NARK**, *n (col)* - a policeman who deals with narcotics violations.

NATCH, *adv (col)* - naturally, of course.

NATIONAL GUARD, *n* - the military reserve force controlled by each state and equipped by the federal government. It is made up of part-time soldiers and can be called into

federal service by the President, e.g. in time of war.

NATIVE AMERICAN, *n* - American Indian.

NAVY YARD, *n* - a naval shipyard.

NEAR-SIGHTED, *adj* - short-sighted.

NEAT, *adj (col)* - wonderful, terrific. *It was a neat party.*

NEBBISH, *n (col)* - a weak-willed, timid, ineffectual person. From Yiddish *nebekh*, poor, unfortunate. The adjective is **NEBBISHY**.

NECK, *v (col)* - to snog. *They were seen necking in the park.*

NERD, *n (col)* - a stupid or objectionable person, or one interested in scientific pursuits but socially inept.

NERVY, *adj* - bold, brash, impudent or brazen, but, in any case, with a lot of nerve. GB *nervy* = jumpy, apprehensive.

NEWSHAWK or **NEWSHOUND**, *n (col)* - a newspaper reporter.

NEWSMAN, *n* - a man who gathers, reports or edits news.

NICKEL, *n* - a five-cent coin.

NICKELODEON, *n* - an early type of jukebox. Formerly, a cinema charging five cents for admission.

NIGHT CRAWLER, *n* - a large earthworm that crawls out of the ground at night. Often used as fishing bait.

NIGHT LETTER, *n* - a telegram sent for delivery the next day at a cheaper rate than an ordinary telegram.

NIGHT STICK, *n* - a policeman's truncheon.

NIGHTGOWN, *n* - nightdress.

NIP AND TUCK, *adv & adj* - neck and neck.

NIPPLE, *n (col)* - a baby's dummy or the teat on a baby's bottle.

NISEI, *n* - a person born in the US of parents who emigrated from Japan.

NIX, *v (col)* - to veto, deny or refuse.

NO-GO, *adj* - not in a suitable condition to go ahead. Used also a noun: *The launch was a no-go due to technical problems.*

NO-NO, *n (col)* - something completely unacceptable, or a social blunder.

NORMAL SCHOOL, *n (old)* - teacher training school.

NOSH, *n (col)* - a snack of light meal, and not

NOTIONS

PAD

as in GB food in general. From a Yiddish word meaning to nibble on something.

NOTIONS, *pl n* - pins, thread, ribbons, buttons, and similar wares used for sewing; haberdashery.

NUDNIK, *n (col)* - an obtuse, dreary or annoying person.

NUTS, *pl n (col)* - the testicles.

O

OATMEAL, *n* - porridge.

OBO, *n (abbr)* - in the small ads short for Or Best Offer. Equivalent of ONO - Or Near-est Offer.

OBSERVATION car, *n* - a railway carriage fitted with large glass windows to give passengers a good view of the scenery.

ODOMETER, *n* - milometer.

OFAY, *n (col)* - a disparaging term for white people, used by blacks.

OFF, *v (col)* - to murder.

OFFICE, *n* - (a doctor's or dentist's) surgery.

OIL PAN, *n* - sump.

OKIE, *n (col)* - a migrant farm worker, especially one fleeing the dust bowl of Oklahoma in the 1930s.

OLD GLORY, *n* - the flag of the US.

OLD MONEY, *n* - the inherited wealth of established upper-class families, or the people possessing it. *He married old money.* The contrast is with the nouveau riche.

OLEO, *n (old)* - margarine. Short for oleomargarine. Pronounced *o-lay-o*.

ONE-ON-ONE, *adj* - one-to-one, individualised. *You will receive one-on-one instruction.*

OP-ED PAGE, *n* - a newspaper page, usually opposite the editorial page, that carries signed columns and other articles expressing personal viewpoints.

OPEN HOUSE, *n* - 1. a period of time when a house for sale may be viewed, or the house itself. 2 an at-home or open day.

OPEN PRIMARY, *n* - a primary in which any reg-

istered voter may vote for any nominee, regardless of party. In a **CLOSED PRIMARY**, only members of a particular party may vote.

OPERATING ROOM, *n* - operating theatre.

ORCHESTRA OR ORCHESTRA SEATS, *n* - the front stalls in a theatre.

ORDINANCE, *n* - by-law.

ORNERY, *adj* - mean-spirited and contrary, cantankerous.

OUT OF IT, *adj (col)* - 1. in a daze, bewildered, often because of drugs. 2. unable to succeed. *The Hawks are out of it this season.*

OUT TO LUNCH, *adj (col)* - not in touch with the real world, crazy.

OUTFIT, *n (col)* - a group of people working together, especially a military unit or a business organization.

OUTHOUSE, *n* - an outside lavatory.

OUTLET, *n* - a power point. Another name for a socket.

OUTSIDE LANE OR OFFSIDE LANE, *n* - the slow lane on a US highway. Hence, the opposite of GB usage, where the slow lane is the inside lane.

OUTSIZE, *adj* - of clothing, extra large or XL.

OVER EASY, *adj & adv* - see **SUNNY-SIDE UP**.

OVERPASS, *n* - flyover.

P

PACIFIC STANDARD TIME OR PACIFIC TIME or (*abbr*)

PST, *n* - standard time in the 8th time zone west of Greenwich, therefore eight hours behind GMT. Used in the Pacific coastal states.

PACIFIER, *n* - a baby's dummy.

PACK RAT, *n (col)* - a petty thief or a hoarder of miscellaneous objects.

PACKAGE, *n* - packet, parcel.

PACKAGE STORE, *n* - an off-licence. Also called a **LIQUOR STORE**.

PACKINGHOUSE, *n* - an abattoir.

PAD, *n (col)* - bribe money taken and shared by police officers. The expression **ON THE PAD**

PADDLE

PESKY

means taking such bribes.

PADDLE, *v (col)* - to spank. Used as a noun, it means a ping-pong bat.

PALOOKA, *n (col)* - a stupid or clumsy person, especially a broken-down boxer. *So this bum Wilson gets the title shot ... and what do I get - a couple of bucks and a one-way ticket to Palookaville (On the Waterfront).*

PANCAKE TURNER, *n* - fish slice.

PANEL TRUCK, *n* - a delivery van.

PANHANDLE, *v (col)* - to approach strangers and beg for money or food. A person who does this is a **PANHANDLER**.

PANTIES, *pl n* - knickers.

PANTOMIME, *n* - not a traditional Christmas entertainment, but communication by means of gesture and facial expression. *Having lost his voice, he could make himself understood only by pantomime.* Also a show performed by a mime artist.

PANTS, *pl n* - trousers. GB pants = underpants.

PANTYHOSE, *pl n* - tights. US tights = ballet tights.

PANTYWAIST, *n (col)* - a sissy, a pansy.

PAPER ROUTE, *n* - a paper round.

PAPERHANGER, *n* - a person who hangs wall-paper as an occupation. Colloquially, a person who passes bad cheques or a counterfeiter.

PARAFFIN, *n* - paraffin wax. GB paraffin = US kerosene.

PARAKEET, *n* - budgerigar or other small parrot.

PARALEGAL, *n* - a person with specialised legal training who assists a lawyer, comparable to an articled clerk.

PARKA, *n* - anorak.

PARKING GARAGE, *n* - a multistorey car park.

PARKING LOT, *n* - a car park.

PARKWAY, *n* - a wide road, often divided by a median strip and landscaped with trees and plots of grass.

PARLAY, *v* - 1. to stake the winnings of one bet on a subsequent one. The GB equivalent is to double up. As a noun, it is similar to an accumulator. 2. to make money multiply. *They parlayed some small investments into a huge fortune.*

PARLOR CAR, *n* - a first-class railway coach with individual reserved seats. Also called a chair car.

PAROCHIAL SCHOOL, *n* - a school supported by a church parish, usually Roman Catholic.

PARTY, *v* - to carouse or revel.

PARTY FAVOR, *n* - a Christmas cracker.

PARTY-POOPER, *n (col)* - a wet blanket, a person who refuses to participate with enthusiasm.

PASS-THROUGH, *n* - a hatch, especially one between a kitchen and a dining room that is used for passing food.

PASTIES, *pl n* - small, adhesive patches used to conceal a woman's nipples. Worn principally by exotic dancers.

PASTRAMI, *n* - highly seasoned smoked beef.

PATROL WAGON or **PADDY WAGON**, *n* - Black Maria.

PATROLMAN, *n* - a policeman who patrols an assigned area, i.e. an ordinary policeman.

PATSY, *n (col)* - a person easily taken advantage of, manipulated or cheated. Perhaps from Italian *pazzo*, a fool.

PAY STATION, *n* - a coin- or card-operated public telephone.

PAYOLA, *n (col)* - money paid in bribes, especially to disk jockeys to promote records, or the practice of paying such bribes.

PEANUT GALLERY, *n* - in a theatre, the gods.

PECAN, *n* - a hickory tree or its sweet edible nut, similar to a walnut.

PECKER, *n (col)* - penis.

PEELER, *n (col)* - a striptease dancer.

PEMMICAN, *n* - a small concentrated cake of dried meat pounded into paste and mixed with berries and nuts. Originally a Native American food, now used for emergency rations.

PENITENTIARY, *n* - a state or federal prison. Sometimes shortened to pen.

PENNY, *n* - a cent.

PENNY-ANTE, *adj* - cheap, low-budget, small-scale. A derogatory term.

PERIOD, *n* - full stop.

PERSIMMON, *n* - an orange-coloured fruit about the size of a plum.

PESKY, *adj (col)* - annoying, troublesome. *Pesky flies.*

PHI BETA KAPPA

PHI BETA KAPPA, *n* - a society of university graduates of the highest academic ability, or a member of this society.

PHILADELPHIA LAWYER, *n (col)* - a lawyer who is particularly shrewd and adept at manipulating legal technicalities.

PHONOGRAPH, *n (old)* - another word for gramophone or record player.

PHOOEY !, *interject* - used to express disbelief, contempt or disgust.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST, *n* - another name for a physiotherapist.

PIAZZA, *n* - it also means a veranda.

PICAYUNE or **PICAYUNISH**, *adj (col)* - of small value, trifling, petty. Also, any coin of little value, especially a nickel or five-cent piece.

PICKUP, *n* - 1. a pickup truck, a small open-backed lorry. 2. the ability to accelerate rapidly. *This car has good pickup.* 3. a hitchhiker. 4. *(col)* - a stranger with whom one makes casual acquaintance, usually in anticipation of sexual relations.

PICKY, *adj (col)* - fussy, choosy, hard to please.

PIG OUT or **PORK OUT**, *v (col)* - see **SCARF**.

PIECE, *n (col)* - gun.

PIKER, *n (col)* - a petty or stingy person, or a shirker.

PILGRIM FATHERS or **PILGRIMS**, *n* - the English Puritans who sailed on the Mayflower and founded the first colony at Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620.

PINCH HIT, *v* - in baseball, to take the place of the scheduled batter, especially when a hit is badly needed. Hence, to stand in for someone else in a time of need.

PINK SLIP, *n (col)* - a notice of termination of employment.

PINKIE, *n* - little finger.

PINT, *n* - 1 US pint = 0.473 litre. 1 GB pint = 0.568 litre.

PINWHEEL, *n* - (firework) a Catherine wheel.

PISSED, *adj (col)* - profoundly angry, indignant. An abbreviation of **PISSED-OFF**, as is **P O'D**, pronounced *pee-owed*. It never has the GB meaning of drunk.

PIT, *n* - 1. the stone of a plum, cherry, etc. 2. a section of an exchange devoted to a spe-

PLURALITY

cial line of trading, e.g. *the grain pit*.

PITCH, *n (col)* - a line of talk designed to persuade, especially a sales pitch. It can be used as a verb, meaning to try to promote or sell, but the usual expression is **MAKE ONE'S PITCH**.

PITCHER, *n* - in baseball, the player who pitches the ball to the batter.

PITMAN, *n* - another name for the connecting rod in a car.

PITS, *pl n (col)* - the pits: the most loathsome person, thing, place or situation. *McEnroe is remembered for repeatedly accusing a bemused Wimbledon referee of being the pits of the earth.* From armpits.

PIZZAZZ or **PIZAZZ**, *n (col)* - an attractive mixture of vigour and style.

PLACE, *v* - (of a racehorse) to finish in the first three, but especially to finish in second position.

PLANK, *v (col)* - to cook or serve meat or fish on a special wooden board. *They sell boards specially made for planking food, with grooves for the juices.*

PLAY, *n* - a strategic move or manoeuvre in a game, especially in American football. *A brilliant play.*

PLEA BARGAINING, *n* - an arrangement between prosecution and defence whereby a defendant in court pleads guilty to a lesser charge and the prosecutor in return drop more serious charges.

PLEBE, *n* - a first-year cadet at a naval or military academy.

PLEXIGLASS, *n* - perspex. Both words are trade names which have become generic. *The display pieces are sealed inside plexiglass cases.*

PLUG, *n (col)* - 1. something inferior, defective or worthless, especially an old worn-out horse. 2. a piece of chewing tobacco.

PLUG UGLY, *n (col)* - a hard man, thug.

PLUMB, *adv (col)* - really. The word is used as an intensifier. *The decision was plumb stupid. After all that work I'm plumb tuckered-out.*

PLURALITY, *n* - a relative majority, i.e. when the winning party has more votes than any

other contending party but not an absolute majority.

POCKET BOOK, *n* (*old*) - handbag.

POCKET VETO, *n* - the action of the President in retaining a Congressional bill unsigned during the last ten days of a session, thereby effectively killing the bill.

PODIATRY, *n* - another word for chiropody. Also **PODIATRIST**, a chiropodist.

PODUNK, *n* (*col*) - any small, isolated, insignificant place. Synonymous with **JERKWATER**.

POISON IVY, *n* - a shrub which causes a painful rash and itching on contact with the skin.

POLECAT, *n* - a skunk.

POLICE, *v* - to make an area neat and tidy, e.g. *They policed the barracks. It's time you started policing your room.*

POLLYWOG, *n* - another name for tadpole.

PONY, *n* (*col*) - a crib, either a word-for-word translation of a foreign language text, used illicitly in a test, or a paper from which exam answers are copied.

PONY UP, *v* (*col*) - to pay money owed or due.

POOCH, *n* (*col*) - a dog.

POOP, *n* (*col*) - 1. inside information. *He gave me all the poop on their new models.* 2. excrement. A **POOPER-SCOOPER** is an instrument for scooping up the faeces of a dog or other pet.

POOP, *v* (*col*) - 1. to tire out or exhaust. *After the match he was pooped.* To **POOP OUT** is to abandon something because of tiredness. *He pooped out of the race.* 2. to defecate.

POP THE CLUTCH, *v* (*col*) - to release the clutch too quickly, thereby causing the car to lurch forward.

POPOVER, *n* - a light puffy hollow muffin, made with eggs, milk and flour.

POPSICLE, *n* (*col*) - an ice lolly. Originally a trademark.

PORK BARREL, *n* (*col*) - a government project which creates jobs and other benefits in a particular locality as well as advantages for its political representatives.

POST EXCHANGE or (*abbr*) **PX**, *n* - a shop that sells goods to military personnel and their families, on a military base. Similar to a Naafi.

POTATO CHIPS, *pl n* - potato crisps.

POTHOLDERS, *pl n* - oven gloves.

POUND, *n* - the symbol #, called hash or square in GB.

POUND CAKE, *n* - a rich fruit cake, similar to a Madeira cake.

POWDER, *n* (*col*) - in the expression **TAKE A POWDER**: to depart hastily, disappear, run away.

POWDERED SUGAR, *n* - icing sugar. Also known as confectioner's sugar.

PRACTICAL NURSE, *n* - a person who has practical experience of nursing but is not a graduate of a degree programme in nursing.

PRECINCT, *n* - 1. a district of a city for administrative, electoral and police purposes. 2. the police responsible for such a district.

PREPARATORY SCHOOL or **PREP SCHOOL**, *n* - a private boarding school which prepares secondary students for university, and which enjoys a similar social status to that of public schools in GB. The adjective is **PREPPIE**, meaning typical of the manners, style and attitude of such schools or students. *He addressed the crowd with preppie self-confidence.*

PRESIDENT, *n* - the general manager of a company. Also, **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**.

PRESIDENTS' DAY, *n* - a public holiday occurring on the third Monday in February, commemorating the birthdays of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

PRETZEL, *n* - a brittle savoury stick-shaped biscuit, glazed and salted on the outside, usually served as a snack.

PRIMARY or **PRIMARY ELECTION**, *n* - a local election in which voters registered with a particular party choose a candidate from several nominees.

PROCTOR, *n* - a supervisor or monitor who invigilates university examinations, enforces discipline, etc. Also used as a verb.

PRODUCE DEPARTMENT, *n* - in a supermarket, the area where fresh fruits and vegetables are found. Pronounced *prod-oose*.

PROFESSOR, *n* - a title which is much more common in US universities than in British. An **ASSISTANT PROFESSOR** is a lecturer, an AS-

SOCIATE PROFESSOR is a senior lecturer or reader, and a **FULL PROFESSOR** is the equivalent of a GB professor.

PROM, *n* - a ball or formal dance at a high school or university. Short for promenade.

PROWL CAR, *n* - a police patrol car.

PRUNERS OR PRUNING SHEARS, *pl n* - secateurs.

PUBLIC SCHOOL, *n* - an elementary or secondary school supported by public funds and providing free education. Hence, the opposite of a private school or a GB public school.

PULL-OFF, *n* - a lay-by on a motorway.

PULLMAN OR PULLMAN CAR, *n* - a luxurious railway coach, especially a sleeping car.

PUNCHBALL, *n* - a game resembling baseball in which a light rubber ball is struck with the fist rather than with a bat.

PURPLE HEART, *n* - a decoration awarded to US military personnel wounded in action.

PURSE, *n* - handbag.

PUSHCART, *n* - another name for barrow.

PUSSY, *n (col)* - 1. the vulva. 2. a woman considered as a sexual object. A man who is **PUSSY-WHIPPED** is one who is henpecked.

PUT DOWN, *v (col)* - to criticize, belittle or disparage. *You're always putting me down.* The noun is **PUT-DOWN**, something disparaging.

Q

QUART, *n* - 1 US quart (0.946 litre) = 0.8326 GB quart.

QUARTER, *n* - a 25-cent coin.

QUARTERBACK, *n & v* - in American football, a backfield player who leads the team and decides the next move. Hence, colloquially, as a verb: to lead or direct operations.

QUICK-AND-DIRTY, *adj* - cheaply made or done, of inferior quality. *A quick-and-dirty construction project, a quick-and-dirty research report.* Used as a noun, the word usually refers to a cheap café.

QUIRT, *n* - a riding whip with a leather thong

at one end and a lash of braided rawhide.

QUITTER, *n* - a person who gives up easily, a defeatist or a deserter.

QUONSET HUT, *n* - equivalent of a Nissen hut. Sometimes used without a capital.

R

RACE CAR, *n* - racing car.

RACE MEET, *n* - race meeting.

RAFT, *n (col)* - a large number, collection or amount. *They asked him a raft of questions.*

RAG, *v (col)* - 1. to tease or taunt. 2. to berate or scold.

RAILROAD, *n* - railway. US railway = tracks on which trains run, whereas railroad refers to the company, e.g. *Union Pacific Railroad.*

RAILWAY, *n* - any track for the wheels of a vehicle to run on. But GB railway = US railroad.

RAINCHECK, *n (col)* - 1. a ticket stub for a sporting event that permits readmission at a future date if the event is cancelled because of bad weather. 2. a voucher issued to a customer wishing to buy a sale item which is temporarily out of stock and which permits him to do so later at the sale price. Colloquially, **TAKE A RAIN CHECK** means to accept the postponement of an offer: *He declined our invitation to dinner, saying he would take a rain check.*

RAISIN BREAD, *n* - currant bread.

RAMBUNCTIOUS, *adj* - boisterous, disorderly.

RAMPIKE, *n* - a standing dead tree or tree stump, especially one killed by fire.

RAP, *v (col)* - to chat or exchange views, especially in a candid way. *1960s youth culture was mainly drugs, the quest for meaning, and endless rapping.* A **RAPPER** is a person who participates in a **RAP SESSION**, a bout of candid conversation, as well as a perpetrator of rap music.

RAP, *n (col)* - a criminal charge, as in **BEAT THE RAP**, to escape punishment or be ac-

RATHSKELLER

ROCK AND RYE

quitted, and **TAKE THE RAP**, to take the consequences of a crime, whether guilty or not.

RATHSKELLER, *n* - a bar or restaurant, usually below street level, where important quantities of beer are consumed. From the German word **RATSKELLER**, the cellar of a town hall used for festive drinking.

RATTY, *n* - tatty, shabby. The word has none of the GB connotations of irritability or annoyance.

RAUNCHY, *adj* - lewd, vulgar or sexually explicit.

RAZZ, *v (col)* - to tease, rag, banter, or deride.

REAL-ESTATE AGENT OR REALTOR, *n* - estate agent.

REAR END, *v* - to bump into the car in front. A **REAR-ENDER** is an accident in which one car hits another from behind.

RECESS, *n* - a break between classes at school, or any similar break.

RECONSTRUCTION, *n* - the period after the Civil War when the South was reorganized and reintegrated into the Union (1865-77). An **UNRECONSTRUCTED PERSON** is one who maintains outdated attitudes and beliefs, particularly a Southerner.

REDCAP, *n* - a porter at a railway station or airport.

REDNECK, *n (col)* - 1. a poor uneducated white farm worker, especially in the southern states. 2. a reactionary and bigoted person. Also used as a modifier: *redneck attitudes*.

REFLECTORS, *pl n* - (on the road) Catseyes.

REFORMATORY OR REFORM SCHOOL, *n* - a youth custody centre, i.e. a penal institution for young or first offenders.

REGENT, *n* - a member of the governing board of certain schools and universities.

REGULAR, *adj* - the word also means ordinary or customary, as in **REGULAR COFFEE**, coffee with cream and sugar. A **REGULAR GUY** is someone who is likable, dependable, normal.

RELIEF, *n* - government welfare payments to people in need. Those who receive such aid are **ON RELIEF**.

RELOCATE, *v* - to move to a new place, especially to another area or place of business.

See **LOCATE**.

RESERVE BANK, *n* - one of the 12 main banks of the US Federal Reserve System.

RESIDENT DOCTOR, *n* - registrar.

RESTROOM, *n* - a room equipped with lavatories for public use.

RÉSUMÉ, *n* - another name for curriculum vitae. Pronounced *rez-oo-may*.

REV OR REV UP, *v (col)* - to stimulate or enliven. *I don't know what it would take to rev up this deadass bunch - dynamite probably.* The adjective **REVVED** means primed and ready.

REVIEW, *v* - to revise for an exam. Or, as a noun, revision.

RHINESTONE, *n* - an artificial gem made of paste or glass, with facets that sparkle in imitation of a diamond. A symbol of certain aspects of Americana, associated with the costumes of country and western singers and Las Vegas showgirls.

RIB ROAST, *n* - a joint of beef or venison, with a large quantity of meat on the outside of the rib.

RICH, *adj (col)* - in the expression **TOO RICH FOR MY BLOOD**: too expensive. *It's a good restaurant, sure, but too rich for my blood.*

RIDE, *v (col)* - to tease, ridicule or harass with persistent criticism.

RIDE, *n* - a lift in a car, e.g. *We ran out of gas and had to thumb a ride into the city. Can I give you a ride someplace?*

RINGER, *n (col)* - 1. short for **DEAD RINGER**, someone who looks like someone else. *He's a ringer for his dad.* 2. in sport, a contestant, especially a horse, entered illicitly, e.g. under false representations of identity, ability, etc.

RINKY-DINK, *adj (col)* - old-fashioned, worn out, cheap or of inferior quality.

RIPPED, *adj (col)* - very drunk.

ROBIN, *n* - larger than the European robin. It is associated with the first days of spring rather than with Christmas.

ROCK, *n* - a stone.

ROCK AND RYE, *n* - a liqueur made of whisky blended with fruit.

ROCK-RIBBED, *adj* - firm, inflexible, especially

ROCK-RIBBED

SAP

where principles or loyalties are concerned:
a rock-ribbed Republican.

ROCKFISH, *n* - striped bass.

ROMAINE, *n* - cos (lettuce).

ROOKIE, *n (col)* - a new and inexperienced recruit.

ROOMER, *n* - a lodger. A **ROOMING HOUSE** is one where rooms are let.

ROOT, *v (col)* - to encourage or applaud a contestant, to cheer on.

ROOT BEER, *n* - an effervescent soft drink made from various roots, herbs and bark.

ROTC, *n (abbr)* - short for Reserve Officers Training Corps. Comparable to the CCF (Combined Cadet Force).

ROUND-TRIP TICKET, *n* - a return ticket.

ROUSTABOUT, *n* - an unskilled labourer on an oil rig.

ROW HOUSE, *n* - a terraced house.

ROWBOAT, *n* - a rowing boat.

RUBBER, *n* - a condom. GB rubber = US eraser.

RUBBER BAND, *n* - elastic band.

RUBBER BOOTS, *pl n* - Wellington boots.

RUBBERNECK, *v (col)* - to gape or gawk inquisitively, especially in a naive or foolish manner. *The cars slowed down so drivers and passengers could rubberneck at the accident.* The noun is **RUBBERNECKER**.

RUBBERS, *pl n* - galoshes, overshoes.

RUBE, *n (col)* - an unsophisticated country fellow, a bumpkin.

RUMBLE, *n (col)* - a gang fight, or, as a verb, to be involved in gang fights.

RUMMAGE SALE, *n* - a jumble sale. Also **GARAGE SALE**.

RUMPUS ROOM, *n* - a recreation room used for noisy activities, such as parties or children's games.

RUN, *n* - a ladder in tights or stockings.

RUN, *v* - to stand for political office.

RUN A LIGHT, *v (col)* - to go through a red light. *He got a ticket for running a (red) light.*

RUN OFF AT THE MOUTH, *v (col)* - to talk too much.

RUNWAY, *n* - a catwalk for modelling clothes.

RUSH, *v* - to make a concerted effort to gain someone's participation or agreement. On campus, to seek to recruit new members for a fraternity or sorority. Also used as a

noun: *a sorority rush.*

RUTABAGA, *n* - a swede.

RYE, *n* - short for rye bread and also for rye whiskey, which is extremely common, since by law US whiskey must contain not less than 51% rye.

S

SACK, *n (col)* - bed. To **SACK OUT** is to hit the sack, go to bed.

SACK LUNCH, *n* - a packed lunch.

SAD SACK, *n (col)* - an inept or clumsy person.

SADDLE SHOE, *n* - a casual shoe, usually white, with a band of leather in a contrasting colour across the instep.

SAILBOAT, *n* - sailing boat.

SALE, *n* - in the expression **ON SALE**, meaning at a reduced price.

SALESCLERK, *n* - **SEE CLERK**.

SALES TAX, *n* - similar to VAT but added when you pay. That is, the tax, a percentage which varies from State to State, is not included in the price marked on a product.

SALISBURY STEAK, *n* - a patty of ground beef mixed with eggs, onions and various seasonings, grilled, baked or fried and covered with gravy.

SALT LICK, *n* - a salt flat, an exposed natural deposit of salt that animals lick.

SALT SHAKER, *n* - salt cellar.

SALTINE, *n* - a thin, crisp cracker sprinkled with coarse salt, often served with soup.

SANDBAG, *v (col)* - to treat unfairly or severely, or to coerce. *When persuasion didn't work, they tried to sandbag him.*

SANDBOX, *n* - sandpit.

SANDLOT, *n* - a piece of waste ground used by children for unorganized games and sport, especially **SANDLOT BASEBALL**.

SANITARY NAPKIN, *n* - sanitary towel.

SAP, *n & v* - cosh.

SARAN WRAP, *n* - cling film. Formerly a trade-

mark.

SASHAY, *v (col)* - to strut or flounce in a showy manner, or to walk in a markedly casual way. From French *chassé*, a gliding dance step. Pronounced *sa-shay*.

SASQUATCH, *n* - a very large, hairy, manlike beast purported to inhabit the woods of the Pacific Northwest and to leave huge footprints. For this reason, also known as Bigfoot.

SASS, *v* - to talk or answer back in an insolent way. As a noun, it means impertinent or disrespectful speech. The adjective is **SASSY**.

SAUCE, *n (col)* - booze.

SAVINGS ACCOUNT, *n* - a deposit account.

SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION, *n* - US equivalent of a building society.

SAWBUCK, *n* - 1. a sawhorse, especially one with an X-shaped supporting structure. 2. (*col, old*) - a ten-dollar bill. This usage was inspired by the Roman numeral X, formerly printed on each corner of the note.

SCAG or **SKAG**, *n (col)* - 1. cheap, low-quality heroin. 2. a despicable person. The adjective is **SCAGGY**: sleazy.

SCALLION, *n* - spring onion.

SCALP, *v (col)* - to resell at a much higher price than the established one, e.g. tickets to a sporting event, i.e. to tout. *He makes a living scalping tickets to the big matches.*

SCAM, *n (col)* - a swindle.

SCARF or **SCARF OUT**, *v (col)* - to eat a lot. *We went to this new vegetarian place and really scarfed out.* Equivalent expressions are **PIG OUT** and **PORK OUT**.

SCHEDULE, *n* - a time-table. Pronounced *skedge-ule*.

SCHLEMIEL, *n (col)* - a clumsy or unlucky person, a habitual bungler.

SCHLEP, *v (col)* - to trudge, lug, drag along.

SCHLOCK, *n (col)* - something that is shoddy, trashy, e.g. literature or merchandise. A **SCHLOCKMEISTER** is a person who produces or deals in it.

SCHMALTZ, *n* - 1. animal fat used in cooking. 2. (*col*) - excessively sentimental art of music, maudlin sentimentality. The adjective

is **SCHMALTZY**.

SCHMEAR or **SCHMEER**, *v (col)* - to bribe someone or to soft soap someone. From a Yiddish word meaning grease.

SCHMUCK, *n (col)* - a prick, a stupid and obnoxious person. From Yiddish *shmok*: penis, fool.

SCHNOOK, *n (col)* - a sucker, a dupe, an easily victimized person.

SCHNOZ, *n (col)* - a large nose.

SCHOONER, *n* - a large beer glass, holding a pint or more. Pronounced *skoön-er*.

SCOPE OUT, *v (col)* - to examine or study something carefully or in detail. *He had scoped the company out before applying.*

SCOTCH TAPE, *n* - sellotape.

SCOW, *n* - a large flat-bottomed boat with square ends, used chiefly for transporting freight. Also a sailing boat with a flat bottom.

SCRATCH, *v* - to cancel the name of a candidate from a party ticket in an election.

SCRATCH PAD, *n* - notepad, writing block.

SCREEN DOOR, *n* - an outer door of fine-mesh wire whose purpose is to exclude insects when the normal inner door is left open for coolness.

SCRUB BRUSH, *n* - scrubbing brush.

SCRUBS, *pl n* - a surgeon's theatre whites. Also called a **SCRUB SUIT**.

SCUTTLEBUTT, *n (col)* - gossip, rumour.

SCUZZY, *adj (col)* - dirty, grimy. *Scuzzy windows.* 2. disreputable, sleazy. *They were running a scuzzy business.*

SECOND-GUESS, *v* - 1. to criticize or judge after the event, with hindsight. 2. to anticipate or predict.

SECRET SERVICE, *n* - a branch of the US Treasury Department primarily concerned with the suppression of counterfeiting and the protection of the President. Nothing to do with the CIA.

SEDAN, *n* - saloon car.

SELECTMAN, *n* - any member of the local boards of most New England towns.

SELF-RISE FLOUR, *n* - self-raising flour.

SEMESTER, *n* - a term at school. The academic year is divided into two semesters of 15 to

SENIOR

SHUCK

18 weeks each.

SENIOR, *n* - a final-year student at high school or university. See **FRESHMAN**.

SET-UP, *n (col)* - an event the result of which is prearranged, e.g. a contest.

SETUPS, *pl n (col)* - the ingredients and equipment, such as ice, soda, glasses and mixers, necessary for serving various alcoholic drinks. Some restaurants allow customers to bring their own alcohol and charge only for the setups.

SHADE, *n* - a window blind or awning.

SHADES, *pl n (col)* - sunglasses.

SHAFT, *v (col)* - to treat unfairly or cruelly or both. Often used as a noun with *the*: *They were hoping for a raise but all they got was the shaft, as usual.*

SHAG, *v* - to follow or to chase and retrieve. In baseball, to chase and catch **FLY BALLS** in practice.

SHAKE DOWN, *v* - to extort money.

SHAKEDOWN, *n (col)* - 1. a voyage to test a newly commissioned ship or aircraft or to familiarize the crew with its duties. 2. an act of extortion. 3. a thorough search.

SHAPE UP, *v (col)* - to improve one's behaviour or performance dramatically, often in the ultimatum **SHAPE UP OR SHIP OUT**: improve or be expelled.

SHARECROPPER, *n* - a tenant farmer who pays over a part of his crops as rent.

SHEENY, *n (col)* - a derogatory word for a Jew.

SHEER CURTAINS or **SHEERS**, *pl n* - net curtains.

SHELLAC, *v (col)* - to batter or to defeat decisively.

SHERBET, *n* - a sorbet.

SHILL, *n* - a person who poses as a satisfied customer or an enthusiastic gambler to dupe bystanders into parting with their money. As a verb, it means to lure someone into a swindle.

SHINGLE, *n (col)* - a small signboard or nameplate outside the office of a doctor, lawyer, etc. *He can't hang out his shingle until he takes his bar exam.*

SHINNY, *v* - to climb up something, e.g. a pole or a tree, using the hands and shins.

SHIRTWAIST, *n* - a woman's blouse or bodice

resembling a shirt.

SHOESTRING, *n* - another name for shoelace.

SHOO-IN, *n (col)* - a sure winner or an easy victory.

SHOOT, *interj* - a euphemism for shit. *Shoot, they forgot to pay me.*

SHOOT FROM THE HIP, *v (col)* - to act or respond impulsively. *I wish that once in a while you would think before you speak, instead of just shooting from the hip the way you do.*

SHORT ORDER, *n* - food that is easily or quickly prepared. As a modifier: *a short-order cook, a short-order counter.*

SHORTS or **JOCKEY SHORTS**, *pl n* - men's underpants that usually reach mid-thigh, as well as short trousers.

SHOT, *n* - 1. a glass of spirits. 2. a hypodermic injection, a jab. 3. in baseball, a home run.

SHOW, *v* - to come in third in a horse race. In the US, an each-way bet is on a horse to win, to place or show.

SHOW AND TELL, *n* - an activity in US primary schools in which children bring to class items of interest, e.g. caterpillars or butterflies, and talk about them. By extension, a public presentation or display.

SHOWBOAT, *n* - another name for a showoff.

SHOWER, *n* - a party held to honour and give presents to someone, e.g. a prospective bride or a new mother. *A bridal shower, a baby shower.*

SHRINER, *n* - a member of a US secret fraternal Masonic-type order, the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine.

SHTICK or **SCHTICK**, *n (col)* - 1. a person's special aptitude or talent. 2. an entertainment routine.

SHUCK, *n* - the outer covering of something, e.g. the husk of a grain of maize or the shell of an oyster. As a verb it means to remove this covering, or, colloquially, to cast something off: *They shucked their clothes and lay down on the bed. The city has shucked its ratty image.* The interjection **SHUCKS** is an expression of embarrassment, mild disappointment or annoyance.

SHYSTER, *n (col)* - an unethical, unscrupulous

SHYSTER

person, especially a lawyer or a politician.
SIDE MIRROR OR **SIDEVIEW MIRROR**, *n* - wing mirror.

SIDEBURNS, *pl n* - sideboards.

SIDESWIPE, *v (col)* - to scrape the side of another car when driving. *The guy must have been drunk - he drove down the alley side-swiping parked vehicles all the way.*

SIDEWALK, *n* - pavement.

SIDING, *n* - a covering on the outside wall of a house to make it weatherproof.

SILK-STOCKING, *adj* - wealthy, aristocratic. *A silk-stocking neighborhood, silk-stocking prep schools.*

SILVERWARE, *n* - see **FLATWARE**.

SIMON LEGREE, *n* - a brutal taskmaster. After a cruel slave dealer in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

SINKER, *n (col)* - another name for a doughnut.

SKEET OR **SKEET SHOOTING**, *n* - a form of clay-pigeon shooting in which targets are launched from traps at varying speeds and angles to simulate the flight of birds.

SKI MASK, *n* - balaclava.

SKILLET, *n* - another word for frying pan.

SKINNY-DIP, *v (col)* - to swim in the nude. A person who does so is a **SKINNY-DIPPER**.

SKINS, *pl n (col)* - tyres. *My first set of skins only lasted six months.*

SLAMMER, *n (col)* - a jail or prison.

SLASH, *n* - stroke, as in *and/or* (*and-slash-or*).

SLATE, *n* - a list of candidates in an election.

SLATE, *v* - to schedule or put on an agenda. *The history lecture is slated for Friday afternoon.*

SLED, *n* - another name for a sledge, toboggan.

SLEW, *n* - a great number or amount, a lot. *Behind him he left a slew of unpaid bills. MS Office 2000 boasts a slew of new features.*

SLINGSHOT, *n* - catapult.

SLOPPY JOE, *n* - barbecued beef in a spicy tomato sauce, served on an open bun.

SLOT MACHINE, *n* - a fruit machine.

SLOWPOKE, *n (col)* - slowcoach.

SLUG, *n* - 1. a metal token for use in slot ma-

SNOWBIRD

chines, etc., especially one used illegally.
 2. (*col*) - a slow-moving or lazy person.

SLUGFEST, *n (col)* - a fight in which many heavy blows are exchanged, or a baseball game in which many hits and runs are scored.

SLUMGULLION, *n* - a cheap and watery meat stew.

SLUSH FUND, *n* - a fund created by a group for corrupt practices, such as bribery.

SMALL POTATOES, *pl n (col)* - something insignificant. *His loftiest ambition is still pretty small potatoes. You think that's bad, believe me it's small potatoes compared to what's going to happen if Harry finds out.*

SMART-ASS, *n (col)* - another word for a smart aleck.

SMARTS, *pl n (col)* - know-how, brains, intelligence.

SMIDGEN, *n* - a very small amount.

SMOKESTACK, *n* - a tall chimney.

SMOKEY, *n (col)* - a highway patrolman. From the resemblance of some patrolmen's hats to that of Smokey the Bear, an animal who warned against fires in US Forest Service posters.

SMUDGE, *n* - a smoky fire intended to drive insects away or to protect fruit trees and plants against frost. As a verb, it means to light such a fire.

SNAFU, *n (col)* - a chaotic or confused situation. Used also as a verb, to make chaotic, and as an adjective. Originally a military term, an acronym of *situation normal all fucked up*. Pronounced *sna-foo*.

SNAKE OIL, *n* - 1. a quake remedy. 2. Speech or writing intended to deceive, humbug.

SNAP FASTENER, *n* - a press stud.

SNATCH, *n (col)* - an act of kidnapping. Also a verb: *They snatched the kid on his way to school.*

SNEAKERS, *pl n (col)* - gym shoes, tennis shoes.

SNOW, *v (col)* - to deceive or overwhelm someone with elaborate, insincere talk. A snowjob is an instance of this.

SNOWBIRD, *n (col)* - a winter vacationer in the South.

SOAK, *v (col)* - to overcharge. *They intend to*

SOAK

introduce a series of soak-the-rich corporate taxes.

SOCIAL REGISTER, *n* - a directory listing a community's social elite.

SOCIALITE, *n* - a person who is or who seeks to be prominent in fashionable society.

SODA CRACKER, *n* - another name for a soda biscuit, i.e. a plain biscuit leavened with sodium bicarbonate. A water biscuit.

SODA FOUNTAIN, *n* (*old*) - a counter serving soft drinks, ice-cream dishes, sandwiches and snacks.

SODA JERK, *n* (*old*) - a person who serves at a soda fountain.

SODA OR POP OR SODA POP, *n* - a fizzy drink.

SOFTBALL, *n* - a variation of baseball, played ten to a side instead of nine and using a larger, softer ball, pitched underhand.

SOLICITOR, *n* - 1. an officer responsible for the legal affairs of a town, city or government department. 2. a person who solicits trade or contributions.

SOLITAIRE, *n* - patience (the card game).

SOPHOMORE, *n* - a second-year student in secondary school or at university. See freshman.

SOREHEAD, *n* (*col*) - a disgruntled or easily offended person. A whiner. *Don't be such a sorehead.*

SORORITY, *n* - on campus, a social club for women students. The female equivalent of a fraternity.

SOUTHPAW, *n* (*col*) - someone who is left-handed, especially a left-handed baseball pitcher.

SOWBELLY, *n* (*col*) - salt pork or bacon.

SOY BEANS, *n* pl - soya beans.

SPARK PLUG WIRES, *pl n* - spark plug leads.

SPEAKEASY, *n* - a place where alcohol was sold illicitly during Prohibition.

SPECIAL DELIVERY or (*abbr*) **SD**, *n* - express mail.

SPIC OR SPICK, *n* (*col*) - a racist name for a Hispanic person.

SPIEL, *n* (*col*) - a speech or argument intended to persuade, usually associated with salesmen. *I made my spiel about how I thought I could improve the company's productivity.*

STATION WAGON

SPIGOT, *n* - an outdoor tap or the wooden tap placed in the bung hole of a cask. An indoor tap is a faucet.

SPIKE, *v* (*col*) - to add alcoholic liquor to a non-alcoholic drink. *The punch was spiked with rum.*

SPIKE HEEL, *n* - stiletto heel.

SPIKE HEELS, *pl n* - another name for stiletto heels.

SPIT CURL, *n* - kiss curl.

SPITBALL, *n* - 1. a piece of paper chewed and shaped into a lump, as thrown by schoolboys. 2. in baseball, an illegal pitch in which saliva is applied to the ball before it is thrown.

SPOOK, *n* (*col*) - 1. racist term for a black person. 2. a spy. As a verb, it means to frighten: *Any sudden noise or movement could spook the cattle.*

SPORT COAT, *n* - a sports jacket.

SPORTING HOUSE, *n* (*col*) - a euphemism for brothel.

SQUARE KNOT, *n* - reef knot.

SQUASH, *n* - any of a number of marrow-like plants, or the fruit of these plants, eaten as a vegetable.

SQUIRT GUN, *n* - another name for a water pistol.

STANDUP, *adj* (*col*) - courageous and loyal. A standup guy.

STARS AND BARS, *n* - the first flag of the Confederate states. Used with a singular or plural verb.

STATE, *adj* - pertaining to state rather than to federal authority.

STATE TROOPER, *n* - a state policeman.

STATE'S EVIDENCE, *n* - 1. the evidence for the prosecution given on behalf of the state in a criminal prosecution. 2. in the expression **TURN STATE'S EVIDENCE**, to give evidence against a former accomplice. Equivalent to **GB queen's evidence**.

STATEHOUSE, *n* - the building in which a state legislature holds sessions.

STATESIDE, *adj & adv* - of or in the continental United States.

STATION WAGON, *n* - estate car.

STATUTORY RAPE, *n* - the criminal offence of

STATUTORY RAPE

having sexual intercourse with a girl under the age of consent.

STEAMER, n - a soft-shell clam, cooked usually by steaming.

STEER, n - a young ox, especially one castrated before sexual maturity and raised for beef. A bullock. To give or sell someone a bum steer is to give bad information or advice.

STENOGRAPHER, n - a shorthand typist.

STICK CANDY, n - rock, as sold at the seaside.

STICK SHIFT, n - another term for manual transmission.

STICKPIN, n - a tiepin.

STIFF, v (col) - 1. to tip someone inadequately or not at all. *He stiffed the waiter.* In the US, tipping is expected, 15-20% being considered the basic rate. 2. to cheat someone of something owed. His roommate stiffed him for the rent.

STOCK COMPANY, n - 1. a company whose capital is divided into transferable shares. 2. a repertory company.

STOCKADE, n - a military prison or detention area.

STOGY OR STOGIE, n - a cheap cigar. Pronounced stoe-gy.

STOMP, v (col) - to assault viciously, to clobber. *The gang stomped anyone they thought might be homosexual.*

STOOL PIGEON, n (col) - a police informer.

STOOP, n - a small porch or platform with steps leading up to it at the entrance to a house or building.

STOPLIGHTS, pl n - see traffic signals.

STORE, n - a shop.

STOVEPIPE HAT, n (col) - a top hat. See HIGH HAT.

STRAIGHT, adj - neat, not mixed with anything else, undiluted. Straight bourbon.

STRAIGHTARROW, adj - absolutely honest, morally upright.

STRAW BOSS, n (col) - a worker who acts as a boss or foreman in addition to his normal duties.

STREETCAR, n - a tram.

STREETLIGHT OR STREETLAMP, n - a lamppost.

STRIKE, n - in baseball, a pitched ball that is

counted against the batter, e.g. one that is swung at and missed. A batter is out when he has three strikes against him. Used figuratively in many situations.

STRING BEANS, n pl - runner beans.

STROKE, n (col) - a compliment or comment that enhances a person's self-esteem. A usage from transactional analysis. Also used as a verb. Used as an adjective, it means pornographic or masturbatory, as in stroke book, stroke mag.

STROLLER, n - a child's collapsible pushchair.

STUDENT, n - used in a broader sense in the US to refer to anyone studying, irrespective of age.

STUMBLEBUM, n (col) - 1. a blundering or inept person. 2. a punch-drunk boxer.

STUMP, n - to campaign, especially by political speech-making. The expression on the stump refers to a place or occasion used for campaign oratory.

STUMP ORATOR, n - a rabblouser.

SUBDIVISION, n - a tract of land for building composed of subdivided lots, or, by extension, a housing estate built on such land.

SUBMARINE, n - another name for hero sandwich.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER, n - supply teacher.

SUBWAY, n - an underground railway, the tube.

SUCK, v (col) - to be disgustingly nasty, offensive, or of wretched quality. *This movie not only fails as entertainment, it sucks.*

SUCKER, n (col) - another word for lollipop.

SUDS, pl n (col) - beer.

SUMMA CUM LAUDE, adv - see CUM LAUDE.

SUMMATION, n - an argument containing a summary of principal points, especially a lawyer's closing speech in a law case.

SUNNY-SIDE UP, adj - of eggs, fried on one side only. The alternatives are over easy, fried on both sides but liquid in the centre, and over hard.

SUPER, n (col) - short for the superintendent (or caretaker) of a block of flats or offices.

SUPERHIGHWAY, n - motorway. See FREEWAY.

SUSPENDERS, pl n - braces.

SWEET POTATO, n - a vegetable, orange-coloured when boiled, commonly eaten in

SWELL

the US instead of ordinary or white potatoes.

SWELL, *adj* (col, old) - great, wonderful.

SWELLED HEAD, *n* (col) - a bighead, a conceited person.

SWING SHIFT, *n* - the work shift between the morning and evening shifts, usually 4 p.m. to midnight.

SWINGER, *n* (col) - a person who freely engages in promiscuous sex, especially a husbandswapper or wifeswapper.

SWITCH, *n* - a railway siding or railway point.

SWITCH HITTER, *n* (col) - in baseball, a player who can bat either right-handed or left-handed. By extension, a bisexual person.

SWITCHBACK, *n* - a roller coaster.

SWITCHBLADE, *n* - a flick knife.

SYNDICATE, *v* - to sell programmes to several independent television or radio stations, or to sell columns or comic strips for simultaneous publication in several newspapers.

T

TAB, *n* (col) - a bill, e.g. in a restaurant. *Who's picking up the tab?*

TABLE, *v* - to suspend discussion of a motion or a bill indefinitely. The opposite of the GB meaning.

TABLE CREAM, *n* - single cream.

TACKY, *adj* (col) - 1. dowdy, seedy, in poor repair. *She always looks tacky. Tacky clothes. A tacky old farmhouse.* 2. tasteless, shabby. *A tacky remark. A tacky thing to do.*

TAD, *n* - a small boy, a very small amount, a bit. *She may be a tad overweight but she's still a good-looker.*

TAFFY, *n* - a chewy sweet made from brown sugar or molasses boiled with butter. Also, a less common name for toffee.

TAG, *n* - label.

TAG SALE, *n* - a jumble sale.

TAILGATE, *n* - another name for the tailboard

TERRITORY

of a lorry. As a verb, it means to drive too closely behind another vehicle. A **TAILGATE SALE** is a boot sale.

TAKE FIVE, *v* - to take a five-minute break.

TAMMANY HALL, *n* - central organization of the Democratic Party in New York county. In the early part of the 20th century, it became a byword for boss-ruled, corrupt municipal politics.

TANK, *n* (col) - a jail or jail cell.

TAR BABY, *n* - a situation or problem from which it is virtually impossible to extricate oneself. From an Uncle Remus story by Joel Chandler Harris, *Bre'r Rabbit and the Tar Baby*.

TARDY, *adj* - late, especially at school. A late pupil is given a **TARDY SLIP**.

TARHEEL, *n* - a native or resident of North Carolina. Tar was once a major product of the state.

TAXI DANCER, *n* - a woman employed, e.g. by a nightclub, to dance with customers for a fee. So-called because the dancers are hired, like taxis, for a short period of time.

TEA CART, *n* - tea trolley.

TEAMSTER, *n* - a truckdriver. Formerly, the driver of a team of horses. The word is now used mainly in the plural, to signify the Teamsters Union, one of the largest trade unions in the world.

TEE OFF, *v* (col) - to make or become angry or disgusted, to brown off. *He was teed off because she didn't call.*

TEETER-TOTTER, *n* - another name for a see-saw.

TELEPROMPTER, *n* - autocue. Both words are trademarks.

TELLER, *n* - cashier in a bank or Post Office.

TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT, *n* - a storm in a teacup.

TEMPLE, *n* - another name for a synagogue, especially one of a Reform or Conservative congregation.

TERRITORY, *n* - a subdivision of the US which is not a state but which is administered by an appointed or elected governor and an elected legislature, e.g. the Virgin Islands. Most states were territories before achieving full statehood.

TEXAS GATE

TRASH

TEXAS GATE, *n* - a cattle-grid, i.e. a grid of metal bars covering a ditch or hollow, intended to allow the passage of vehicles but to prevent that of livestock.

THANKSGIVING DAY or **THANKSGIVING**, *n* - the fourth Thursday in November, an annual holiday marked by family reunions and traditional celebratory dinners of turkey and pumpkin pie. It marks the gathering in of the first harvests by the Pilgrim Fathers in 1621.

THEATER, *n* - the usual word for cinema. Also a theatre.

THEME, *n* - a short essay set as a writing exercise in school.

THIRTEEN COLONIES, *n* - the original American colonies which rebelled against the British.

THREADS, *pl n (col)* - clothes.

THRIFT SHOP, *n* - a charity shop.

THROUGH, *prep* - 1. up to and including: *We work Monday through Friday.* 2. *adj* - finished: *She was through with the project.* 3. *adj* - providing transportation to a destination with no stops and no transfers: *a through bus, a through ticket.*

THROUGHWAY, *n* - a motorway. See **FREEWAY**.

THUMB TACK or **tack**, *n* - drawing pin.

TIC-TAC-TOE, *n* - noughts and crosses.

TICKET, *n* - the list of candidates nominated by one party in an election. Same as **SLATE**.

TIGHTS, *pl n* - ballet tights or any similar garment. GB tights = US hose or pantyhose.

TIGHTWAD, *n (col)* - a stingy person, a miser.

TINHORN, *n (col)* - a petty braggart who makes extravagant and fraudulent claims, e.g. about being rich and important.

TIRE WRENCH, *n* - a tyre lever.

TOGETHER, *adj (col)* - self-possessed, emotionally stable, well-organized. *He's a very together guy.*

TOLL FREE, *n* - free phone.

TOM COLLINS, *n* - a long iced drink of gin, lemon or lime juice, soda and sugar.

TONGUE DEPRESSOR, *n* - another name for a doctor's spatula.

TONY, *n* - an annual award for outstanding achievement in the theatre.

TONY, *adj (col)* - stylish, distinctive, classy,

chic.

TOTAL, *v (col)* - to write off a car, i.e. by wrecking it totally and beyond repair. *His car was totalled in the accident.*

TOTE, *n (col)* - to haul or lug a heavy burden, or to carry on one's person. *How were they to know he was toting a gun?*

TOUCH FOOTBALL, *n* - an informal version of American football, played by any number of people and characterized by players being touched rather than tackled.

TOUCHDOWN, *n* - in American football, a scoring play worth six points, achieved by being in possession of the ball beyond the opponent's goal line. A field goal, worth three points, is accomplished by kicking the ball through the opponent's goalposts above the crossbar.

TOUGH CALL, *a, n* - a difficult decision.

TOWN MEETING, *n* - an assembly of the citizens of a town, or, especially in New England, of its qualified voters, to discuss and decide community issues.

TRACK, *n* - 1. sports performed on a track, or track and field events as a whole. Athletics. 2. a racecourse.

TRACKING, *n* - streaming in schools.

TRADE, *v* - swap.

TRAFFIC CIRCLE, *n* - a roundabout.

TRAFFIC SIGNALS, *pl n* - another name for traffic lights. Also called stoplights, red lights or lights. One set of lights is singular, as in *Turn left at the next light.*

TRAILER, *n* - a caravan.

TRAILER TRUCK, *n* - an articulated lorry. Also known as a tractor trailer rig, or, more commonly, as an eighteen wheeler or a semi.

TRAMP, *n (col)* - a prostitute or promiscuous girl or woman.

TRANSOM, *n* - a fanlight.

TRASH, *n* - rubbish. A **TRASH CAN** is a dustbin. **POOR WHITE TRASH** refers derogatorily to poor White people living in the depressed areas of the southern US.

TRASH, *v (col)* - 1. to throw away or discard. 2. to vandalize or destroy. 3. to subject to scathing criticism or verbal abuse, to vilify. *New York critics have been trashing*

TRICK OR TREAT

Spielberg movies for years.

TRICK OR TREAT, *n* - words shouted by children at Hallowe'en when they call at houses, indicating that unless they are given a present of money or sweets, they will play a trick on the householder.

TROJAN, *n* - the most common brand of condom, the equivalent of Durex in GB.

TROLLEY OR TROLLEY CAR, *n* - a tram. Also called a STREETCAR.

TRUCK, *v (col)* - to move in a steady dragging kind of walk.

TRUCK STOP, *n* - a transport café.

TRUCKER, *n* - a lorry driver or market gardener.

TRUNK, *n* - the boot of a car. Sometimes called the rear deck.

TRUNK SALE, *n* - the sale of last season's merchandise in a clothes shop.

TUBE, *n (col)* - television, the box. See BOOB TUBE.

TUCKER, *v (col)* - to tire out, exhaust. *Working in this heat will tucker a man pretty fast.*

TURKEY, *n* - 1. a theatrical production that flops. See BOMB. 2. an inept or undesirable person.

TURNKEY, *adj* - supplied or purchased in a condition ready for immediate use: *a turnkey factory, a turnkey computer system.*

TURNOVER, *n* - a small pastry, made by covering one half of the crust with fruit and folding the other half over the top.

TURNPIKE, *n* - a motorway which drivers must pay a toll to use.

TUSH, *n (col)* - backside. From the Yiddish. Pronounced *toosh*.

TUXEDO, *n* - a dinner jacket, often shortened to TUX.

TWIN BILL, *n* - see double header.

TWISTER, *n (col)* - a cyclone or tornado.

TWO BITS, *n (col)* - twenty-five cents or a petty sum. *I wouldn't give two bits for his chances.* The adjective TWO-BIT means worth 25 cents, as in *a two-bit cigar*, or worth very little, petty, insignificant: *a two-bit hoodlum.*

TWO-CYCLE ENGINE, *n* - two-stroke engine.

TWO-PERCENT MILK OR 2% MILK, *n* - semi-skimmed milk.

TWOER, *n (col)* - a coupon offering two of

UTILITY BILLS

something, especially tickets to a play, for the price of one.

U

UNCLE, *n (col)* - in the expression **CRY UNCLE** or **SAY UNCLE**, meaning to express a desire to surrender or give up. *The larger boy pinned him down but still he refused to cry uncle.*

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, *n* - the system established by abolitionists before the Civil War to help runaway slaves make good their escape, usually to Canada.

UNDERSHIRT, *n* - a vest. US vest = GB waistcoat.

UNGLUED, *adj (col)* - in a distressed state. To **COME UNGLUED** is to lose one's composure.

UNLISTED NUMBER, *n* - an ex-directory number.

UNRECONSTRUCTED, *adj* - see **RECONSTRUCTION**.

UP-FRONT, *adj & adv (col)* - 1. straightforward, frank. *Thank you for being so up-front and constructive in your criticism.* 2. paid in advance. *They won't do it without some up-front cash.*

UPCHUCK, *v (col)* - to vomit. A variation of **CHUCK UP**.

UPCOMING, *adj* - forthcoming.

UPGRADE, *n* - an upward slope. The expression **ON THE UPGRADE** means improving or progressing, e.g. in importance or health.

UPSET PRICE, *n* - reserve price at an auction.

UPTOWN, *adj & adv* - in or towards a part of town which is away from the centre. As a noun, it means a part of town comfortably removed from the centre, especially a residential part. The opposite of **DOWNTOWN**.

UTILITY BILLS, *pl n* - bills for electricity, gas and water.

VACUUM BOTTLE

WETBACK

V

VACUUM BOTTLE OR **VACUUM FLASK**, *n* - a thermos flask.

VALANCE, *n* - another name for pelmet.

VALEDICTORY, *n* - a farewell oration delivered at commencement or graduation by the most outstanding student, the valedictorian.

VAMOOSE, *v (col)* - to depart hurriedly, scram. From Spanish *vamos*, let's go. Pronounced *va-moose*.

VANITY, *n* - another name for a dressing table.

VAUDEVILLE, *n* - music hall.

VEEP, *n (col)* - a vice president. Pronunciation of the abbreviation V.P.

VEHICLE INSPECTION CERTIFICATE, *n* - equivalent of the M.O.T. certificate.

VENIRE, *n* - the panel from which a jury is selected.

VEST, *n* - a waistcoat.

VEST-POCKET, *adj* - diminutive, small enough to fit into a waistcoat pocket. A vest-pocket park is a very small park set in a heavily populated urban area.

VETERAN, *n* - an ex-serviceman, irrespective of age or length of service.

VETERANS DAY, *n* - 11th November, a public holiday observed in honour of veterans of the armed services. Formerly Armistice Day.

VISITING FIREMAN, *n (col, old)* - an important visitor who is entertained impressively, or a free-spending tourist.

VISITING NURSE, *n* - a district community nurse.

VOLSTEAD ACT, *n* - the 1919 law forbidding the manufacture, sale or transportation of alcoholic beverages in the US, announcing 13 years of Prohibition.

W

WAC, *n (abbr)* - a member of the Women's

Army Corps, organized during World War II, but now no longer a separate branch.

WALDORF SALAD, *n* - a salad of diced apples, celery, walnuts and mayonnaise.

WALKER, *n* - a walking frame or Zimmer aid.

WALKING PAPERS, *pl n (col)* - notice of dismissal from a job.

WALKUP, *n (col)* - a block of flats without a lift, or a flat or office in a building without a lift.

WALKWAY, *n* - a path or passage designed for pedestrian use.

WALL ANCHOR, *n* - a Rawlplug.

WAMPUM, *n (col)* - money or wealth. From the money, made of shells strung together, formerly used by North American Indians.

WARD HEELER OR **HEELER**, *n* - a party worker who canvasses votes and performs other small duties at local (i.e. ward) level for a political boss.

WARDEN, *n* - the governor of a prison.

WASH CLOTH, *n* - a face cloth, flannel.

WASH UP, *v* - to wash oneself, not the dishes, especially to wash one's hands.

WASP, *n (abbr)* - an acronym for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

WASTE, *v (col)* - to kill.

WATER COOLER, *n* - a machine for cooling and dispensing drinking water. Very common in US offices.

WATER TOWER, *n* - an elevated tank used as a reservoir.

WAX PAPER, *n* - greaseproof paper.

WAY, *adv (col)* - by a great distance or to a great degree. *We're way behind schedule. That happened way back.*

WEATHER STRIPPING, *n* - draught excluder.

WEDDING BAND, *n* - another name for a wedding ring.

WEENIE, *n (col)* - 1. a hot dog. Short for **WIENER**, or **wienerwurst**, a sausage similar to a frankfurter. 2. a weak and ineffectual man.

WEST POINT, *n* - seat of the US Military Academy. The US equivalent of Sandhurst.

WETBACK, *n (col)* - a disparaging term for a Mexican, especially a labourer who enters the US illegally. From the fact that Mexicans used to swim across the Rio Grande to avoid border controls.

WHAMMY

WHAMMY, *n (col)* - a supernatural spell for subduing one's enemies. Unrelated to a **DOUBLE WHAMMY**.

WHAT'S-HIS-FACE, *n (col)* - what's-his-name. Similarly, **WHAT'S-HER-FACE**.

WHISTLE STOP, *n* - 1. a small town or station at which a train stops only if signalled. 2. A brief appearance of a political candidate, on a whistle-stop tour.

WHITE RAISINS OR GOLDEN RAISINS, *n pl* - sultanas.

WHOLE ENCHILADA, THE, *n (col)* - the whole thing, the whole matter.

WHOLEWHEAT, *adj* - wholemeal.

WIENER, *n* - SEE **WEENIE**.

WIG OUT, *v (col)* - to lose control of oneself emotionally, to become extremely upset and irrational. *When I told her, she wiggled out, and started screaming and throwing stuff at me.*

WINDBREAKER, *n* - windcheater. Originally a trademark.

WINDSHIELD, *n* - windscreen.

WINE STEWARD, *n* - another name for wine waiter.

WOP, *n (col)* - an insulting term for an Italian.

WORK OVER, *v (col)* - to assault or beat up systematically.

WORLD SERIES, *n* - in baseball, a best-of-seven playoff between the two winning teams of the National League and the American League to decide the championship of the major leagues. Comparable to a Test Match in cricket.

WORM FENCE, *n* - a fence of crossed beams supporting one another and forming a zig-zag pattern. Also called a snake fence.

WRANGLER, *n* - a cowboy or herder, especially one who breaks in wild horses.

WRITE-IN, *n* - the act of voting for a person by writing his name on a ballot.

WUSS OR WUSSY, *v (col)* - a weakling. *Don't be such a wuss, just tell him you don't agree.* Shortened from *pussy-wussy*.

ZUCCHINI

Y

Y or **YMCA**, *n (abbr)* - Young Men's Christian Association, or more often the hostel it runs in most big cities. *I'll be staying at the Y.*

YARD, *n* - garden. American use the word 'garden' in a more specialised way to refer to a carefully cultivated area of flowers, vegetables, herbs or fruit. But the area surrounding a house, whether covered with grass or concrete, is almost always a 'yard'.

YARD SALE, *n* - SEE **GARAGE SALE**.

YARDBIRD, *n (col)* - 1. a convict. 2. an untrained or inexperienced soldier, especially one employed on menial duties.

YEGG, *n (col)* - a thief, especially a burglar or safecracker.

YENTA, *n (col)* - a person, especially a woman, who gossips or talks continually.

YO-YO, *n (col)* - a stupid, unpredictable or zany person.

Z

ZAFTIG OR ZOFTIG, *n* - curvaceous, sexually appealing in a plump well-rounded way. From Yiddish *zaftig*, literally juicy.

ZEE, *n* - zed, the last letter of the alphabet.

ZILCH, *n (col)* - nothing, zero.

ZINGER, *n (col)* - 1. a witty, often caustic remark or an awkward question. 2. a sudden revelation or turn of events.

ZIP CODE, *n* - postal code.

ZIT, *n (col)* - a pimple or blackhead.

ZONED OR ZONED OUT, *adj (col)* - 1. high on drugs. 2. dazed, oblivious. *He hasn't slept in 72 hours, no wonder he's zoned.*

ZONK, *v (col)* - to stupefy or stun, or to intoxicate with drugs or alcohol.

ZUCCHINI, *n* - courgette. Pronounced *zoo-kee-nee*.

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Suggestions for Further Reading

- Baugh, Albert C. and Cable, Thomas:
A History of the English Language.
London, 1951.
- Cheshire, Jenny (ed.):
English Around the World.
Cambridge, 1991.
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The History of a War of Words*.
New York, 1980.
- Flexner, Stuart:
I Hear America Speaking.
New York, 1976.
- Lewis, J. Windsor:
*A Concise Pronouncing Dictionary of
British and American English*.
London, 1972.
- McArthur, Tom:
*The Oxford Companion to the
English Language*.
Oxford, 1992.
- McCrum, Robert; Cran, William;
MacNeil, Robert:
The Story of English.
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*A Common Language: British and
American English*.
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- Mencken, H.L.:
The American Language, 4th ed.
New York, 1936.
- Rubinstein, Mary: *Twenty-First Century
American English Compendium*.
Rockville, 1997.
- Strevens, Peter: *British and American
English*.
London, 1972.
- Trudgill, Peter and Hannah, Jean:
*International English: A Guide to the
Varieties of Standard English*, 3rd ed.
London, 1994.

And on the Internet...

A wealth of useful recent material is available on the Internet. Sites come and go, but the following are some of the better ones dealing with the subject at the time of printing this book:

BritSpeak:

<http://pages.prodigy.com/NY/NYC/britspk/main.html>

Dictionary of American and British Usage:

<http://www.peak.org/~jeremy/dictionary/dict.html>

English (British)-American Dictionary: <http://www.bg-map.com/us-uk.html>

Notes on American English:

<http://www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/wwlib/american.html>

United Kingdom English for the American Novice:

<http://www.hps.com/~tpg/ukdict/>

Other titles

Complementary books:

- Elementary Tests · 3 levels
- Advanced Tests · 2 levels
- Structured Tests · 3 levels
- Bilingual Phrases · 5 levels
- Bilingual Translations · 5 levels
- Fill in the gaps · 3 levels
- Guide to Prepositions (English to Spanish)
- Guide to Prepositions - **exercises**
- Guide to Phrasal Verbs
- Phrasal Verbs - **exercises**
- English Verbs one by one
- My English telltale
- Conversation in Action - Let's Talk (for teachers)
- English irregular Verbs

Grammars:

- English Grammar · 3 levels

Pastimes:

- Didactical crosswords

Reading:

- Graded reading - French

Textbooks:

- Stanley
- Stanley, book of exercises
- Stanley, Teacher's book
- On Second Thoughts (children)
- In the Third Place (children)

Others:

- Traveller's guide
 - English - French - Italian - German
 - Portuguese

Business:

- Bilingual Business Letters
 - English - Spanish
 - Italian - Spanish
 - French - Spanish
 - 1,000 Everyday idioms in business